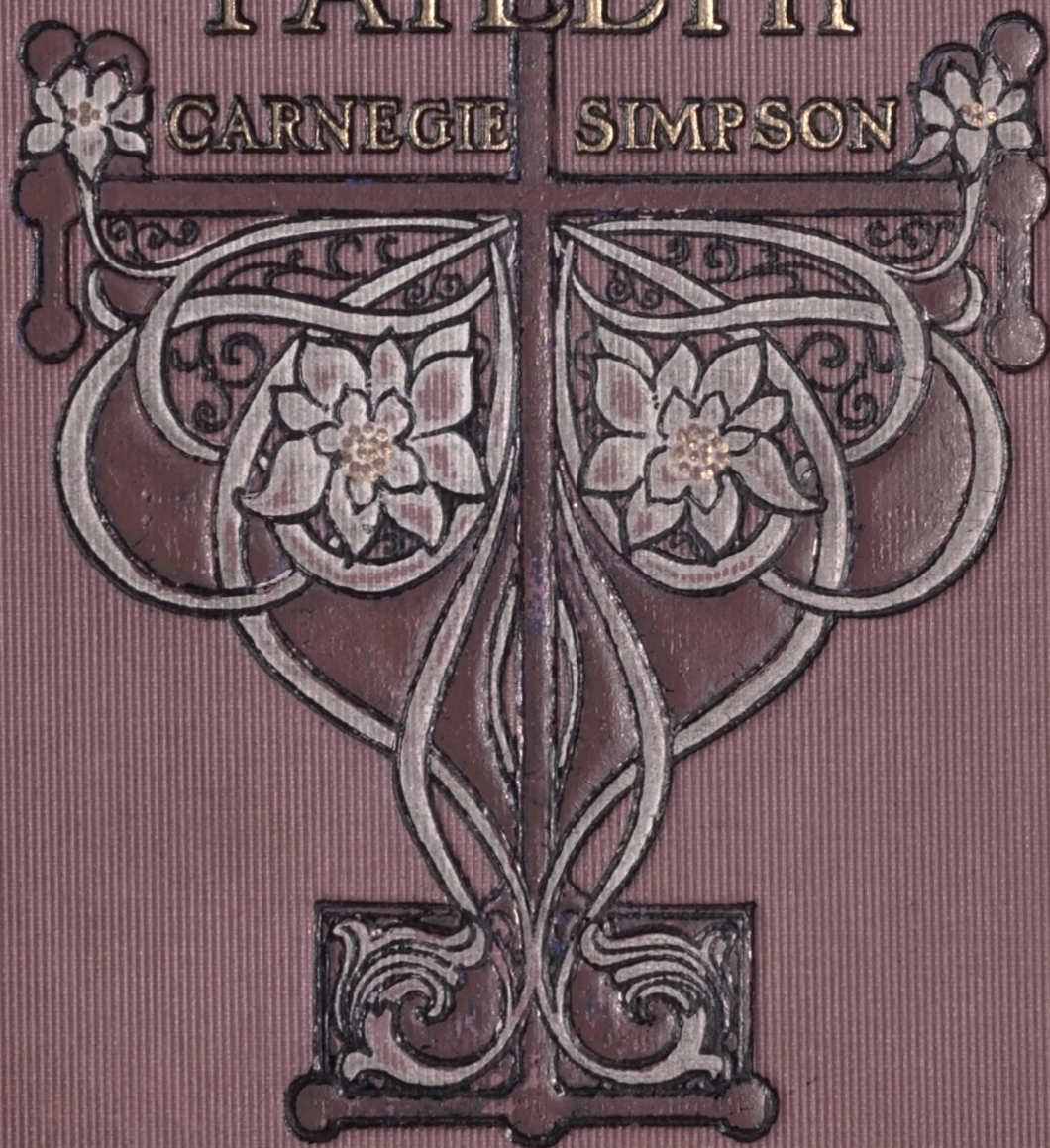


LOVE NEVER
FAILETH

CARNEGIE SIMPSON





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LOVE NEVER FAILETH

LOVE NEVER FAILS

An Emotion touched by Moralities

CARNEGIE SIMPSON



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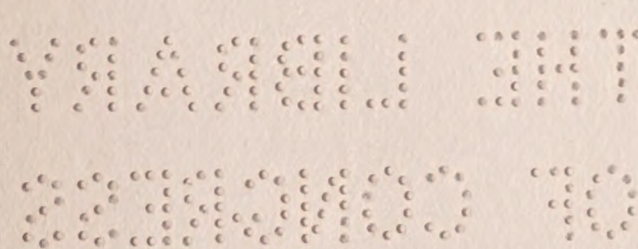
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*As this sketch
done chiefly during a summer vacation,
touches on the "two things in Life
whose secrets are supremely worth
knowing," the writer dedicates it to
an authority on both—his Wife*

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PART ONE

I A SHORT OPENING I MALE QUARTETTE

THE white dress disappeared with a final flash into the wood, and the three men who had been watching from the veranda turned to meet the youth who at that moment entered the room. It was in the Hôtel Splendid at Rosenwald.

“Well?” said the oldest of the group—a man of military aspect.

The newcomer looked slightly foolish.

“She said she was going to read,” he explained.

“And you submitted to be counted less than a book,” replied the other.

“I said, Make me your book. I thought it was rather a neat thing to say myself.”

“Brilliant! But she wouldn’t let you?”

“Rather she did let you,” broke in a clean-

shaven man with an eyeglass. "But she said, If you'll be the book I'll be the paper-knife, or words to that effect, and—cut you."

The rejected smiled weakly, but said nothing.

"Now, my dear boy," the same speaker went on, "I shall avenge you. Tell me what she was going to read, and I'll review it."

"There were two. One was the Badminton on racing, and the other a volume of Browning, *Para*—something, I think."

The reviewer gave a low whistle.

"Well," he mused, stroking his chin affectionately, "she's a mixture. Most of them are, but this is a new blend. What are you going to make of a girl whose choice mental food is a sandwich of the Badminton on racing and Browning's *Paracelsus*? I give her up."

"Don't you think," put in the youngest of the company in a high, drawling voice, "that you may just as well give them all up while you're at it? I can't understand," he continued in a deliberate, didactic way, "why you will keep on talking of women as

if they were cognizable phenomena. Haven't I often told you they aren't? A woman's like the North Pole——"

"Fixed?" said the critic doubtfully. "I thought *varium et mutabile*——"

"Not fixed, but——"

"Frigid, perhaps," interrupted the critic again.

"She was—beastly cold," said the rejected.

"If you will only wait," continued the young sage: "I don't mean frigid either, but undiscovered. So why don't you stop talking about them scientifically and worship them afar off?"

"It's safer afar off," the rejected admitted.

"Sometimes it's inevitable. They may wish to read."

It was said very sweetly but hastily. A reply was forthcoming, but the critic stepped in to preserve the peace.

"Now, don't quarrel," he said. "You know it puts a man awfully on the other fellow's level."

Each looked doubtfully at the other, wondering which of them should take offence, and the speaker went on at once.

“Be good Agnostics and join the faith of the Inscrutable Feminine. Cecil here,” he added, indicating the sage, “is admirably adapted to be our leader in any form of ignorance; while as for you, Harrald,” turning to the would-be cavalier, “you’ve lost a companion, but you’ve found a cult. What do you say, Major?”

The military-looking man was listening to all this with a contemptuous impatience.

“I think you men are talking yourselves silly,” he said, rising, “and what you all want is a good two hours’ tramp.”

The conversation collapsed, and the four went out.

II A DISAPPOINTING MAN

MISS CROTHERS was one of those persons whose natures demand conflicting kinds of happiness and their will has never finally decided between them. That she had brought out with her both a Badminton and a Browning was really only natural. For she was indeed two girls, and the two were very distinct. They had never quite arranged matters between them. She was either wholly the gay enjoyer of life or the serious student of the spirit.

“I am like the House of Commons,” she once said: “one party is in power, but only by a narrow majority that a snap-vote may overturn any day. Now you”—she was speaking to her friend and good angel, Mrs. Walmer—“are like the Lords, the Opposition has never a chance there.”

The good angel was a Liberal and pro-

tested. But the point of the metaphor was just in both cases.

That afternoon, in the pine-wood, there was a full-dress debate in the Commons, and a critical division was impending. In other words, Margaret Crothers, who had opened neither the Badminton nor the Browning, was thinking about Mr. Hamilton.

It was not apparent why he should have raised any serious moral issues within her, or even why she should be thinking of him at all. He had come to the hotel only two days before, and she had spoken a few words with him only once. But there are persons who, without any expression of it on their part, suggest to us a certain view of life and type of character, and to Margaret this newcomer had somehow come to stand for that aspect of life—the severer, more strenuous and nobler, to which the greater part of her own life was a stranger. She had really no sufficient basis for this idea. She knew nothing about the man to justify it. He was a Scotsman and reticent. His chief companions in the hotel seemed to be

children. But many people go largely by intuitions; they do not reach their truest conclusions by collecting evidence. So it is a mistake to press them for reasons, to call them to defend with logic positions which were not reached by logic. Suffice it that it was the person of Arnold Hamilton which on this afternoon stirred this girl into a more serious survey of her life than she had known for many a day. She returned to the hotel with the feeling that it would do her good to get to know this Mr. Hamilton a little.

An opportunity presented itself next morning. They met on the terrace and exchanged greetings. She began to talk of the place and the people. His replies were conventional. The conversation, indeed, threatened to come to a stick. Margaret had the uncomfortable feeling that it was her fault, which was not the case, and that he must be thinking her stupid, which was also a mistake, for he was hardly thinking of her at all.

“There was a painting of that glacier in

the Academy last year," she said at last, for something to say. "Did you see it?"

"Yes, I saw that. What did you think of it?"

She was surprised by his suddenly leading in the conversation, and replied, rather feebly, "I thought it was a fine subject."

"Does the subject matter so very much?" he asked, with something of an awakening interest. "Is it not the only thing that doesn't matter much? What did you think of the picture?"

"I'm afraid I am not a judge," she answered; "but—well, it certainly did not convey to me anything of the severe, lonely feeling that the place itself does."

"Then for you at least it was a failure, whether through the artist's fault or your own, I don't say. For the aim of art is to make us feel, isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so," she assented; and then added interrogatively, "as that of science is to make us know?"

"Exactly," he replied, glancing at her with a swift look of interest.

"But I don't quite see yet how you mean that the subject doesn't matter in art," she said.

"Because," he answered, "what tells upon your feeling, moves you, touches you, is the form of the thing—the qualities of simplicity, truth, harmony, and so on in the treatment of it."

"I perceive you are an art critic," said Margaret.

With rather a bitter little laugh he replied, "You know what the art critics are."

"I know what Disraeli said they were, if that is what you mean: people that had failed in art. Then I don't believe you are an art critic."

"Lots of people," said Arnold, in reply, "said that before Disraeli. Dryden, for instance."

"I hate people," said Margaret, "who are always finding out that everything has been said or done before."

"Oh, I like them."

"It makes nothing worth while doing."

"And so consoles one for not doing anything."

"Do you think people who don't do anything should be consoled?"

"Certainly."

"I say they should be punished."

"They are punished," said Arnold rather gravely, "and as life's punishments are usually unjust, they should be consoled too."

Margaret was perturbed. She had begun to talk to Mr. Hamilton with the vague idea that it would do her good, and the conversation began by promising that. Now it seemed she was called on to do him good. She felt somebody should do something for morality. She would probably have announced that "life is real" and "life is earnest" if Arnold had not almost immediately gone on. She really blushed as she thought of her escape, and her color was charming.

"But I beg your pardon, Miss Crothers," he went on, "for talking so sententiously. People don't come to Rosenwald for this kind of thing. It makes us quite solemn

and unhappy. See how gaily every one else is chatting. That's because they're only gossiping or flirting."

Margaret began to feel a little indignant that he should speak to her in this cynical, trivial way. And yet men had often said very light things to Miss Crothers, and she had permitted it; why, then, should she resent the same thing in this man? She did not ask herself why, but she did resent it. Now how unjust this woman was! Arnold had never pretended that he was going to do her good. If she was deceived about him, it was not he who had done it. But simply because she had built up in her own mind the idea that he would be a good influence, she now began to regard him as a kind of hypocrite. In vain did his sex plead for bare justice. "My dear lady," said the masculine world in the person of this disappointing man, "you must take us as we are, not as you have imagined we are. Half our delight in you is in surprises. We never call them disappointments or take offence at them; we call them new interests and are

refreshed by them." The pleading was in vain. Margaret felt defrauded and almost angry.

The position was relieved by a party of friends coming up to arrange with Miss Crothers about a picnic on the following day. They invited Arnold also, and, being unable to give an excuse, he accepted. Margaret hardly knew whether or not she was glad that she would meet him again to-morrow. She was rather sorry when she heard him invited, and yet was not sorry when he accepted the invitation.

III THE FOSTER-MOTHER

THE next morning was gloriously fine. Margaret was down early, and she took a stroll before breakfast round the hotel grounds. As she was walking, she thought she heard, behind her, footsteps that suddenly stopped and turned another way: looking round, she saw Arnold hurrying out of the grounds by a side-path. She felt sure he had deliberately avoided her, and it surprised and perplexed her. Her surprise and perplexity were increased when, on returning to the hotel, she found that he had left a note for the lady who had invited him to the picnic, apologizing for his absence on the ground of his being sick. Margaret felt there was a mystery here. She did not mention that she had seen him go off, because she felt that he had not wished to be seen; but the matter brooded in her mind, and, as a matter of

fact, Miss Crothers thought far oftener that day of Mr. Hamilton absent than probably she would have done if he had been present. And she still strangely preserved, despite the disappointment of yesterday's conversation, the same idea of him that his disciplined face and restrained manner had first suggested to her. That it has been shown to be incorrect is by no means to every one reason enough for giving up a preconceived idea.

Arnold, who did not know that Margaret had observed him as he set out, walked some miles up a valley and then lay down on the hillside. His mood was certainly not the brave and noble one that she imagined. But she did not know the facts.

Briefly, the facts were these. Arnold Hamilton was a Scottish artist. His father had been in law, but had got into various complications, and when he died he left his widow and two children—a girl and a boy—not too well provided for. The mother, who was of French birth, and from whom her son inherited his artistic capacities,

brought up her children bravely for several years, and then she too died, and the sister and brother found themselves alone. They lived together a life of simplicity, but of the most real happiness. The sister's cleverness—though it was really less her cleverness than her loving self-denial—carried their life through without her brother being obliged to break up his day by earning money, and so he was left free to give himself to the thing he was really made for. By degrees his painting began to establish itself with the public, and his artistic future seemed about to prove a bright one. They moved to London and opened a new chapter of happiness. But life is a game in which we never hold the trumps. In one month, as the spring was budding and his hopes were gladdest, death came again and left him quite alone, and an illness threatened him that made it very doubtful if he could continue to be a painter.

He went abroad to seek rest and change, and, in the course of his journeys, had come to Rosenwald. At first he had tried se-

cluded and unfrequented places, but he found the loneliness unbearable. Anything was better than brooding. A sorrow that calls to action often strengthens; a sorrow that has no outlet but thought easily weakens. Arnold was in no small danger of becoming morbid and bitter if left to himself, and, conscious of this, he had chosen the fashionable Hôtel Splendid. It was better for him at least to keep in sight of the world of happy life, even though his spirit was too deeply bruised to permit him to be more than a spectator of it all. He felt like an outsider at the feast, allowed from some recess to watch the scene in which he could not share. Indeed, he hardly watched it. No man could be more keenly interested in life's movement than he had been; now it seemed to have lost its reality—to have become but a pageant-play upon a stage.

On the morning of the picnic, this sense of his defeat and isolation so weighed upon Arnold's spirit that he felt he could not possibly enter into any social gaiety; so, leaving his apology, he set out alone. He

had not lain long on the hillside before, to his alarm and surprise, he saw the party, which he had thought was going by another road, driving up the valley. Arnold had to hasten behind some large boulders to escape notice. The action made him feel ridiculous and humiliated, and more than ever a cast-away from life. The carriages rattled past. He heard the gay voices as he crouched like a hunted rabbit. The company disappeared round a corner, and it seemed as if life indeed were passing, leaving him behind. He fed his melancholy by repeating to himself several verses of the "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse." The banners passed; the bugles ceased.

Arnold spent the whole of that day among the hills. Picking up a frugal lunch at a hut, he roamed from place to place till gradually he felt as if his very being had become but a part of nature's life. In the late afternoon he was lying again upon a hillside, and his whole spirit seemed absorbed in the great calm, ageless existence about him. Before him stood the Alpine

monarchs in their unimpassioned supremacy, the eternal snow lay in unassailable purity against the unflecked sky, the long valley beneath led the eye to a restful haze of blue. Not a sound broke the silence but the occasional tinkle of a far cow-bell. Nothing seemed to move except the air, which flimmered in the heat. Time itself seemed to be standing still.

To the sensitive soul of the young artist Nature spoke like a mother to a child. She soothed his murmurs; she hushed his bitterness; she gave to his loneliness her companionship. He was comforted, and lay in a sort of passive quietude of spirit, not happy, but no longer in revolt.

“Mortals fail”—he seemed not so much to think it as receive it—“because in their inexperience and enthusiasm they aspire too high. Nature endures because she does not fight against her limitations. Learn of Nature this day moderation and endurance.”

And thus he was soothed—but not satisfied.

Arnold was not a poet, but he had the habit at times of weaving his impressions into verse as he turned them over in his mind. That evening, while the sun sank low in the west and the shadows grew long on the grass, his mood found expression in these lines, which he said over to himself as he walked back down the valley—

His heart aflame with hidden fires
 Of hope and fear, of love and hate,
 The throbbing of untold desires
 And yearnings inarticulate—

Man fills the air with prayers and sighs,
 Till, like a mother grave and mild,
 Nature, that neither strives nor cries,
 Speaks gently to the restless child.

The patience of the standing hills,
 The silence of the lonely sky,
 The cheerfulness of running rills,
 And flowers that bloom, content to die—

From these she draws her soothing balm
 The fevered heart of man to cure,
 Bidding him imitate her calm
 And, rather than aspire, endure.

30 LOVE NEVER FAILETH

And often, wearying to rest,
He will accept the sedative,
And lay himself upon her breast,
And try to be content to live

A life of moderated cheer,
With temperate desires and aims,
Finding some satisfactions here,
And making these his only claims.

But still his restless spirit sighs,
Refusing to be reconciled,
For, while in Nature's arms he lies,
He knows he is not Nature's child.

As Arnold entered the hotel, the irrepressible intimations of the Beyond and Infinite that lie in the tenderness and the glory of a superb sunset awoke in his spirit the higher yearnings, and therefore the deeper sadness. Nature seemed to belie her own message: here was more than moderation, than endurance. But soon "the sun sank and all the ways were darkened." Suddenly it fell down behind the hills; in a few minutes the snow-peaks lost their illusive rosy glow and a deathly whiteness took its place; the radiance of the sky began to fade,

the light and warmth of the world to depart. As it grew darker and colder the great hills loomed out with the same message that they had borne in the heat and glory of the day.

IV WHICH ALL BUT ENDS IN TRAGEDY

“**W**HAT a number of people were away from lunch to-day,” said Mrs. Jay to her friend, Mrs. Poole, as the two sat down in a corner of the *salon* for their usual after-dinner gossip. “The tables were quite empty.”

“Yes, both my neighbors were off.”

“Who are your neighbors, Mrs. Poole? The Italian Count is one, isn’t he? What a fine-looking man he is.”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Poole, “and so interesting. We had a long talk yesterday about the Italian royal family. He seems to know them all. I think he has some high position at court.”

As a matter of fact he was a large exporter of macaroni.

“And who’s on the other side?” said Mrs. Jay.

"That serious young man who came at the beginning of the week. He's a Scotsman, I find. He is so serious-looking that I thought he must be a minister, but he isn't."

"A minister wears a white tie," said Mrs. Jay. She spoke decidedly, for she had seen Mr. Barrie's plays.

"Oh, they don't all do that; though some of them wear more than a tie, and you can't tell them from real clergymen. I remember," continued Mrs. Poole, "my poor husband taking bad once at Interbergen, and I asked what I thought was a clergyman to visit him, and it turned out he was a minister from a place Peebles. Mr. Poole was very bad after he found it out—you know he's a churchwarden. It's very confusing."

"It is indeed," replied Mrs. Jay sympathetically. "I wonder if it's legal."

"I told that young Scotsman about it," said Mrs. Poole. "I wanted to see if he was bigoted."

"And what did he say?"

"Oh, he's not bigoted. He said it would

have saved confusion if the Scotch minister had worn black kilts."

"Was he making fun?"

"Oh no; why should he?"

"I never heard of any one wearing black kilts."

"Well, neither have I; but I suppose they must wear them in the Highlands at funerals."

The conversation dribbled on.

It had, however, one result. Miss Crothers was sitting writing at a table just at hand, and could not help hearing what was said. The reference to Scotland reminded her that her friend, Mrs. Walmer, was visiting in Edinburgh, and induced her to write a letter to her there.

She had hardly finished when some friends came and asked her to join in a dance which had been got up in the hall. After a little hesitation she consented, and went. She was fond of dancing, and, having once begun, danced all through the evening, stirred to the liveliest animation by the strains of an Hungarian band. Margaret had had too

much admiration given her in her life to be affected by the homage of the miscellaneous company at a Swiss hotel, and she had, moreover, a touch of pride in her which saved her from vanity; so she hardly noticed even her closest observers. One of these was the youth whose escort she had rejected some days before when she went out to read her *Badminton* and *Browning*. He had never ceased to press his suit, and to-night was more than usually sentimental because he had drunk at dinner a whole bottle of champagne. Another observer she could hardly have seen. Attracted from his room by the cadence and crash of the Hungarian music, Arnold came down and stood in a corner of a balcony that ran round the hall. The old feeling of being apart from the feast of life that naturally recurred to him as from the recess he looked down on the bright scene below, was forced to give place to the feeling of sheer pleasure as his eyes followed the most brilliant figure in the dance. He watched Margaret with no sentimental emotion, but simply, as one

could not help doing, with lively admiration and a keen sense of the charm of color, form, and movement. He waited for a considerable time, and then went out into the moonlight for a stroll.

It was getting late when Margaret, pleasantly fatigued with the evening's exertions, retired to the veranda for a breath of cooler air. She was standing alone, looking out on the moonlit snow-peaks, when suddenly a man's voice behind her said—

“How lovely you looked to-night.”

She turned and perceived the irrepressible Harrauld. She made him no answer.

“I knew I should find you here,” he continued, and then added, with a vapid smile, “Come a walk!”

“Certainly not, Mr. Harrauld. Would you kindly allow me to go in?”

She tried to pass him, but he placed himself in the way and attempted to seize her hand. She retreated to the other side, and he followed her.

A man's figure suddenly appeared out of the darkness at one of the large windows of

the veranda. Margaret recognized it, and being in real straits, called out quickly—

“Come in, please.”

Arnold entered from the garden. It was an unpleasant situation, but there was no use disguising it.

“Mr. Hamilton,” said Margaret, “would you do me the kindness to give me your arm and take me back to the hall?”

Arnold took in the state of things. He went up to Harrauld, who was getting excited and was trying to pin Miss Crothers in a corner, took him by the shoulders and very emphatically planted him down in a chair. He then gave Miss Crothers his arm, and they went to the door into the house. It would not open. Harrauld, who had locked it on entering and taken the key, giggled with delight. Arnold and Margaret had therefore to go out through the door by which he had entered, and so found themselves in the garden.

She thanked him.

“The moonlight on the glacier is wonderful,” he replied, and released her arm.

A commoner man would have shown his appreciation of the privilege by retaining it; he showed far more by the way he resigned it. They went forward a few steps to see the glacier, and stood several minutes with only an occasional remark.

A clock struck. She half turned to go in.

"If I were an Irishman," he said, "I should say the night is the best part of the day."

"But," she said, with a laugh, "I was hearing to-night that you are a Scotsman, but not bigoted." He looked interrogation; she explained the allusion, and then asked: "But now, tell me, what is a not-bigoted Scotsman?"

"A not-bigoted Scotsman," he replied. "Well, I should describe a not-bigoted Scotsman as one whose hero was John Knox and his heroine Queen Mary."

"Would not that be rather a man without convictions?"

"Oh, a man without convictions would appreciate neither; a bigoted man under-

stands only one of them, but a non-bigoted man would appreciate and understand both. Don't you agree with me? But now, may I ask you a question? What is a non-bigoted Englishwoman?"

"A conundrum. Give it up."

"One who studies, turn about, Badmin-ton and Browning," he replied, looking at the glacier.

She bit her lip, but somehow could not feel exactly angry. She wished she could think of something clever to say, but it wouldn't come. He looked round in a moment and their eyes met. There was an instant's uncertainty, and then they both laughed. He had not laughed for weeks. It was wine to him.

The laughter seemed a new introduction between them. Without any further personal allusions they broke into ready talk. He was going off next day for a short walking-tour. She knew part of the route. A difference of opinion arose about some point in it—whether the way kept a certain wood on the right or the left. They debated it,

and finally made a bet of a box of chocolates upon it. Then they went into the hotel. They bade each other good-night very friendlily. Arnold went to the reading-room. Margaret went upstairs, took her yet unclosed letter to Mrs. Walmer, and added a postscript to it: "By the way, there is a man in the hotel here who lives, or used to live, in Edinburgh—a Mr. Arnold Hamilton. Perhaps your friends know him."

Meanwhile, Mr. Eric Harrald had sought to drown his ire, and at last made his way to the smoking-room, where were the other friends who obliged in the opening chapter. He rang the electric bell, and sat down and called loudly for a cognac. He waited in an abstracted mood till it was brought, and then sat and gazed at the glass with portentous solemnity. The other men said nothing. At last Harrald murmured, half to himself—

"My last drink."

"Well, I'm relieved to hear it," said the critic, "for you seem to have had your allowance for to-day."

"I shall be dead to-morrow," said Har-
rald. "My mind is made up." And he
smiled meaningly, and took a revolver out
of his pocket.

"Now, don't do that," said the critic; "it's
so beastly messy. Jump into a crevasse;
far cleaner." He spoke quietly and with
considerable wisdom, for Harrald might
have done anything that moment.

"And far cheaper," added the sage.
"Saves any funeral." He spoke only flip-
pantly. He was enjoying a supper of *pâté-
de-foie-gras*.

"Don't be a little fool," said the Major,
and he suddenly took away the weapon.
"Go to bed."

"To bed!" replied Harrald, with infinite
scorn. "Do you really think I could sleep?
You don't know what it is to love. Love's
a rare bird, I can tell you—as rare a bird
as edelweiss. I tell you, miserable idiots
of ignorant asses, it's only when a man's
been through the waters and comes out
scorched——"

"My dear fellow," said the critic, "you're

hardly equal at this moment to metaphor. You'd better——”

“You don't understand me, that's it,” replied Harrauld severely. “It is your intellect that is incapable of appreciating my argument. I'll tell you men something,” he went on, less combatively. “I'll tell you why people like me. It's because they don't understand me. Do you know what I am?” He paused, and then added in a whisper, “I'm a myshtery.”

Then he called for another cognac. The Major stepped in. He and the critic conducted the mystery to his bed, and left him snoring.

“A confounded shame of you men,” said the sage, who refused to leave his supper. “I'm sorry for the poor beggar; he was enjoying himself.”

“You should be sorry for his mother,” said that honest moralist, the Major.

“You're a teetotaller, I suppose,” said the sage sneeringly.

“I'm no more a teetotaller than you are,” returned the other; “but,” he added hotly,

"I know the difference better than you do between a man enjoying himself and degrading himself."

The sage felt it safer to seek the cooler atmosphere of philosophy.

"Well, after all," he continued, preparing to take a large bite, "is life worth living?"

"That you will find," said the critic, looking doubtfully at the *pâté-de-foie-gras*, "depends largely on the liver!"

V CUPID'S LONGBOW

WHEN Miss Crothers came downstairs next morning the *portier* gave her a parcel which he said had been sent from a shop. She found it to be a box of chocolates, containing also a card with these lines—

I find you right about that wood,
And so myself your willing debtor;
And herewith make my wager good,
But not, I trust, a lady-better.

The *portier* informed her that Mr. Hamilton had gone off before breakfast.

The next few days at Rosenwald passed dully. The weather was wretched. The mist hung low on the hills, and the rain plashed persistently on the ungrateful ground. There was nothing to do, and the whole day long in which to do it. The men stood at the windows smoking; the women sat in the verandas and read novels.

The depression was deepened by the mournful singing of ditties in the drawing-room by an elderly young lady with a guitar, and the efforts of a funny man from Blackpool, who recited comic selections to a patient audience. The daily post-bag was the only gift of Providence.

One day it brought a letter for Margaret from Mrs. Walmer. In answer to the postscript of her friend's last letter, Mrs. Walmer, who happened to be staying with people who knew a good deal of Arnold and were interested in him, wrote on to Switzerland the outline which they gave of his story.

Margaret—in part, because she had nothing else to do—let this letter fructify in her mind. First, it explained what had disappointed her in Arnold's manner especially on the morning he had evaded her in the garden, and to have a thing of that sort explained is always satisfactory. Then, secondly, it touched her sympathy; and sympathy—what a dangerous emissary that is of something more! But this letter had yet a

third effect on her mind. It made her think again about life. She began to feel that discipline and disappointment are a large part of life—that its real meaning is largely hid in them. She looked at the life of the set which she lived in—was it life? The last gossip, the next gaiety! She had in abundance what were counted the good things of life; and yet, were wealth and ease and admiration and pleasure life's real gifts? Here was one who had known the really great things—the things that ennoble and sweeten and gladden. It seemed to her as if Arnold were the only *living* person among those around her. Of course, all this was rather loose thinking. Our observation of life is hardly likely to be accurate when it is much colored by a personal interest such as Margaret's in Arnold. So her judgments of the rest of the world were exaggerated, and her estimate of him was overdrawn. Nevertheless, this was a true glimpse of life that thus came to her. Just as it is possible—as the theologians tell us—to hold heretical

views in a Catholic spirit, so it is possible to hold incorrect opinions in a true way.

Her meditations were interrupted by the entrance of her aunt. Miss Coryn, with whom Margaret was travelling, was an elderly woman of the world, wealthy, clever and self-willed, who spent her days roaming over Europe with an imperious pug and an obsequious maid.

"Here you are," she exclaimed. "Hood's been hunting for you all over the place. Well, my dear, I can't stand this any longer, and I'm not going to. I'm sending Hood to telegraph for rooms at Badheim."

It was a revelation to Margaret herself to perceive how instinctive was the thought—that means not seeing Arnold again.

"But, aunt——" she began vaguely, and stopped.

"Well, what?" replied Miss Coryn.

"You've not seen this place at all. You were in bed——"

"I was in bed the first week and saw four walls. This week I've been up and seen

mist. I'm told there are hills around here, but I can't wait all the season for them."

It was as if it would be a disappointment to the Alps, on emerging from the clouds, to find that she had gone.

"Let's wait over Sunday," said Margaret. Arnold had said he would be back by the end of the week.

"What are you so anxious to stay for? There must be some reason?"

Miss Coryn looked at her niece sharply, but the answer came at once: "There is no reason in particular, only——"

Margaret felt it was a lie, and stopped. Through that breach in her morals she saw her heart.

"Only what?"

"I think you should see the place."

The breach was increasing and the view widening.

"I want to see the place, but if it isn't visible, I can't help it."

"Give it another Sunday."

"I don't see there's any meteorological

virtue in a Sunday, but you seem bent on it."

"Oh, I'm quite willing to do whatever you want," said Margaret, lying again. "But I think——"

"Think what?"

"I think it's really a pity that you should have been at a place like this and not seen it. You know it's really one of the views of Europe. You would be sorry if it cleared up just after we left."

Miss Coryn was quite deceived, and the end of it was that she consented. She called her maid.

"Have you packed everything, Hood?"

"Nearly everything, ma'am."

"Then go and unpack. We're not going."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Hood, and went.

"Oh, perhaps we should go if she's done all the packing," said Margaret in a moment of sympathy.

"Certainly not on that account," replied Miss Coryn, rising and following her maid that, as the things were being taken out of

the boxes, she might criticize how they had been put in.

Margaret went out for a walk and tried to resume her serious consideration of what is life. The question only broke into laughter in her face. Instead of continuing to be the grave and great problem of existence, of truth and reality and the ideal and so on, it persisted in presenting itself in this ridiculous and irritatingly concrete shape: "You are staying here instead of going to Badheim; now, why?" There was no use philosophizing; the question of her life was just this absurd little interrogation. She tried to survey the Alps, but she was conscious chiefly of an impudent squirrel peeping round the stem of a pine and saying as clear as possible: "Why are you staying?" She looked at the beast, and he scuttled up the side of the tree, like a naughty boy running off after he has rung a door-bell.

Cupid's longbow had hit its mark. He now began to sharpen his hand-weapons for close action.

VI DEALING WITH BOTH LIFE AND DEATH

A DAY or two later, on coming down to breakfast, Miss Crothers found Arnold in the *salle-à-manger*. He did not notice her enter, and she was able, unobserved, to see that he was physically greatly the better for his week's tramp. He looked indeed singularly striking with his bronzed complexion, his clear eyes, his chiseled features, and well-set head. An elderly gentleman of professional aspect, sitting near Margaret, looked at him through his spectacles, and said to his wife—

“Who's that man in dark gray?”

“I don't know. He came late last night.”

“He's got the fatal gift.”

“You mean?”

Margaret really listened for the reply.

“Male beauty; in ninety per cent. of cases it's a curse.”

He said it in the same impartial, scientific tone in which he would have recorded a rainfall.

“Rather a bitter face, I think,” said the wife.

Margaret looked at Arnold again. Yes: there was a bitterness in his face. With the increased strength and handsomeness that his improved physical condition had brought, he seemed certainly to have become harder and colder. While he was away she had been associating him in her mind with the higher and deeper ideals of life, but there was nothing suggestive of these in his face now. It was a set face, and not set towards what she had been thinking of about him. Margaret was somewhat perplexed. It was her old mistake—looking for the man she had imagined him to be, instead of at the man he was. Again, she did not know the facts.

Arnold, too, had been philosophizing. His week's solitary walk among the hills had brought home to him how recent events in his life were affecting him morally. Stand-

ing one day at the divergence of two paths and considering which to take, it struck him how he had absolutely nothing in the world to consider in the choice but himself, and that so it was now in also his whole choice of good or evil. A man's family and social ties are reasons and persuasions, for better or worse, one way or another in life; when these are withdrawn, he is left to make his own choice for his own reasons, and can go ahead. Arnold at that moment had not a tie in the world but the ticket for his luggage.

He was conscious, too, of another thing. It was just in this day of isolation that he was distinctly called on to consider the worth of being really good. For that was at present the only question which his life afforded. All other questions—plans of work, artistic ideals and ambitions—were best avoided. They were only painful. His outward future was so precarious that no purpose was served by his thinking of it. Yes, he was quite aware that the one question of his life was whether what he had

passed through was going to make him stronger and deeper and better, or weaker and harder and worse in his own character. Now Arnold was not a viciously inclined man; there was little in him that would actually choose what was morally bad. But thrown back thus by his isolation to find in himself some command and constraint to virtue, he found little or none. The good fight lacked motive. He thought of God and the moral law, but the idea had no immediateness or power. He recalled the memory of those he had lost, but all that was of a past—a past he would never forget, but a past. In himself he found no motive whatever—rather a strange, impersonal curiosity to see what would become of himself. He would watch himself drifting till the drift ended. Arnold knew very well that this moral indifference would certainly sink some day to actual evil. So be it. It concerned no one else, and he was but a small concern to himself.

Behind all this he was unable to be unconscious that the discipline of his life

might have, and, if he would look at it with other eyes, could have a very other effect on him, and make him a strong man in his loneliness and a tender man in his sorrows. It would not mean that without a noble choice, a regeneration of spirit, and a brave endurance; but with these it might mean it. Arnold was not unaware that he was refusing even to seek this path. And it was that consciousness that put into his moral carelessness a cynicism and into his despondency a defiance which they need not have had.

This was the Arnold whom Margaret had been thinking of as the only morally living person around her!

It was a curious paradox. He had made her an idealist, and meanwhile had become a cynic. He had brought something of salvation to another, and was himself in danger of being a castaway.

They saw each other for only a few minutes that morning as Margaret was waiting to drive with her aunt. She thanked him for the chocolates, and questioned him

about his journey. He soon found himself describing it all to her. And the strange part of it was this. He was describing a journey which had been gloomy and bitter. Places in it there and there had, in his mind, association with only depressing memories. But, before his vivacious and expectant listener, it seemed to lose all its gloom and bitterness, and to assume a positive brightness. She infected it almost with joy. And when at last she exclaimed, "It's a great tour. What a splendid time you've had!" he replied, half laughing as he said it, "Well, upon my word, I begin to think it was."

Margaret was prevented from questioning as to the precise meaning of his answer by being suddenly summoned by Hood. As she went off, Arnold's eyes followed her, and, for the first time, the thought entered his mind that what the tramp of his life needed was—— He dismissed the idea.

Upstairs, Margaret found a strange sight—a scene of lamentation and confusion. The pug was dead. A bone had stuck in

his throat, and Koko was no more. A doctor staying in the hotel had been imperiously summoned; Hood was distracted with orders; the *portier* and the chambermaid were there; Mrs. Poole came in from a neighboring room. In spite of varied counsels and appliances, in spite even of tears, Koko died. Miss Coryn was in an extravagance of grief.

"He was my best friend on earth," she murmured.

"My dear Miss Coryn," said Mrs. Poole, who for days had looked for an opportunity of attaching herself to the wealthy old lady, "how I can sympathize with you! When my dear late husband died, I——"

"Husband!" exclaimed the bereaved contemptuously; "husbands can be replaced. I shall never see another Koko."

Poor Mrs. Poole! It was not the contempt that stung her, but the reflection that her disappointing lot had been, after several years' endeavor, that she could not replace a husband.

"Is that you, Margaret?" continued Miss

Coryn, catching sight of her niece. "You're too late."

"How did it happen?" asked Margaret.

"I had gone downstairs and was just looking for you, when Hood came flying down and said Koko was choking. I rushed up, and I tell you my legs shook so when I got to the room that I could scarcely stand. It was almost over. We got help, but it was no use. Poor Koko! he was always too fast an eater."

Miss Coryn's emotion hushed the whole room into a solemn silence.

"Poor Koko!" said Margaret at last.

"He looked at me before he died, Hood?" said Miss Coryn, appealing for corroboration.

"Yes, ma'am, and smiled so beautiful peaceful-like," replied the maid. The *portier*, who had hitherto been grave, at this point left hurriedly.

"Well, Margaret," her aunt went on, "we'll go back to-morrow. He shall rest in his own old home."

"Aunt, you surely don't mean that you're

going to take the dog's body to England," said Margaret. "I don't suppose he had any wishes on the subject," she continued, rather unfeelingly, "and you couldn't find a more lovely spot than this."

"Well—perhaps. But he shall have a proper grave, and I want a tombstone. I only wish our old rector was here to write an epitaph for it. There's nothing I see in that to smile at. He deserves to be remembered more than many a human."

Miss Coryn spent the day in stately gloom and black satin.

It was after dinner that Margaret told Arnold of the tragic event of the morning.

"Won't you write the epitaph?" she said.

"Give me an idea."

"Well, there's an idea," she replied, and pointed to a great Danish hound belonging to the hotel. "Did you ever see Max look so contented? Haven't you noticed how every day he used to envy Koko's delicacies as they were taken upstairs? Who is it says that 'death extinguisheth envy?'"

"Bacon, wasn't it?" replied Arnold.

"Well, here goes." He took up a menu-card, and after a moment's thought, scribbled on the back of it these lines—

Envy extinguished! Rather say, instead,
It pays its final tribute to the dead;
He had a brute's bliss—life; ah! he has now
Man's one sure, lasting good inherited!

He gave it to her with a laugh, but as she read it her face grew almost stern. For a moment nothing was said.

"You don't approve, I fear," he said to break the silence, feeling, too, slightly ashamed of the silly lines he had written.

"Mr. Hamilton, come outside. I want to speak with you."

It was a command. There is a subtle effect produced on a man the first time a woman commands him in such a way. It marks a psychological moment. Where it is not justified by relationship or years, it must be justified by something else. Arnold was conscious of opening a new chapter in the story of his relationship to Margaret as, with an inquiring but not disobeying glance, he rose and went with her.

VII IN WHICH ARNOLD AND MARGARET UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER

IT was a divine evening. The rain of the previous days had passed and had left in all nature a fresh richness and warmth. The sunset lights were streaming over the fields, painting the rocks with the varied brilliance of the mosses and lichens, shading the fissures on the snowy hills, and melting down the valley into a mystic haze. The monarch peaks were standing out in superb serenity. The air was fresh and sweet after the rain, yet mild with the summer heat. Margaret and Arnold took a path on the hillside that was a smile of flowers.

The beauty of the scene fell on the young artist's spirit like a spell, and for some way he walked without a word, like a man in a dream. His companion's voice broke his reverie. She still held in her hand the menu-card.

"Mr. Hamilton," she asked, speaking rather more quickly than was her wont, "why did you write this? Is it true? I mean, is there not something truer you can say about life than that?"

"Probably there is," he replied, just a little nettled. "I did not give you that as a final philosophy of things. Really, Miss Crothers, you jump on a man. You do not expect me to deliver my inmost soul over the passing of Koko, do you?"

"No; but you have put a bit of it here. I know you have. Is it a true piece?" she persisted.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, is there not something truer and deeper you get out of life than this cynical wanting to be rid of it?"

"Why me?"

"I don't mean to be personal. Anybody. Isn't there enough about us to make us careless? can't you help us to put the better meaning into things?"

Arnold was taken aback. He had never

been preached to in this fashion before—certainly not by a beautiful girl whom he had known only a few days. Yet it was impossible to take offence at her obvious sincerity.

“Why, I repeat,” he answered, “do you put this to me? There are plenty of people who will find truer meanings of life for you. I can’t,” he added, in a lower tone, hardly meaning her to hear.

“You can,” she exclaimed, and then paused. She could hardly yet explain to him how it had been him who had suggested to her thoughts of life’s meanings and lessons. “You didn’t talk that way,” she resumed, “this morning.”

He looked up, and his fine face seemed lit with something more than the light of the setting sun. The vision of what would save his life appeared to him as if a palpable thing. And indeed it was before his eyes.

“This morning,” he replied, almost unaware of what he was saying, “I was talking to you.”

"That has nothing to do with it," said Margaret quickly.

"Yes, it has everything to do with it," asserted Arnold, with an earnestness and a directness which his manner had not had before. "Miss Crothers, I wanted to say to you when you went away this morning that I was grateful to you——" He hesitated.

"I don't know what you mean," she put in.

"Well," he said, "I will tell you what I mean, if you will pardon my speaking to you for a minute about myself." He paused a moment and then went on. "You have guessed, perhaps, that what I was going in for was painting. I used to live in Scotland with my sister—she and I were alone of our family—and the two thoughts of my life were her, and to paint something some day. Well, three months ago—— But why should I trouble you with all these personal matters?"

"I shall not answer any question about troubling me," said Margaret; "but per-

haps it is unfair not to tell you that I know what both the things you are going to mention are." She spoke softly.

"How in the world do you know them?" demanded Arnold, not a little perturbed.

"I think you know people called Bruce. A friend of mine was staying with them lately, and they told her about you."

"But how did it reach you?"

Margaret felt she had almost betrayed herself, and explained that Mrs. Walmer, finding herself writing to Rosenwald, and knowing that Mr. Hamilton was there, had mentioned what the Bruces had said.

"I don't know how the Bruces or any one else knew that I was here," said Arnold, not yet satisfied. "However," he continued in a different and colder tone, "that doesn't matter. And so you pitied me, and therefore talked kindly to me."

"Mr. Hamilton!"

"You don't know that men hate above all other things to be pitied."

"I know that women feel above all other things injustice. Are you just to me, Mr.

Hamilton? I might have let you talk on; would that have been fair? If I was fair to you, you must be fair to me."

"You are quite right," he answered at once, "and I beg your pardon. But, though I said it in a way I shouldn't, it was pity, wasn't it?"

"No, it wasn't. I talked for my own sake and not yours."

"For your sake?"

Margaret was silent for a moment, and then answered in a quiet voice.

"You have referred to your life; do you mind if I refer to mine?" She paused again, and then went on in an abstracted manner as if speaking to herself rather than to another. "Long ago one used to think of life as made for all sorts of great and noble ends, but as one grows up one finds that that must have been some other existence one was thinking of, and that one must live life as one finds it. I suppose one finds what one is capable of finding, but I at least have not found anything great or worthy in the kind of life I live. And I

say you've got to live your life as you find it. One comes to think," she added in a lower, sadder voice, "of the person one meant to be as of some one who is dead."

She stopped, feeling she had made a rather incoherent speech. Arnold was listening gravely and respectfully, but he made no answer.

"And yet," continued Margaret—and she seemed to be, as indeed she really was, bit by bit discovering herself and recording the result—"it is one's present self that is dead. One is not really seeing life and learning it. One's life is without the element of living."

She said the last sentence almost appealingly to him, but he was still silent. She had to go on, and did so rather embarrassedly.

"When I began this soliloquy," she said, "which must have seemed to you rather ridiculous, it was to explain that I talked to you, not for your sake—the idea!—but my own."

"I am not the person to help any one," replied Arnold at last.

"We are speaking frankly," said Margaret. "Then, I can only tell you that it was—it was you that gave me again the idea of living a little more truly."

"Nothing that I said, or could say, could do that."

"It isn't what people say. But you were facing life's real facts and real meanings, and that made me feel how I was living without touching real life at all."

"But I am not facing them," he almost cried out. "You are perfectly right about this," he went on in a calmer tone, taking from her hand the menu-card. "It is contemptible and cowardly: it is not true." He tore the card into pieces. "But," he added, "I spoke for myself in it more than you think."

"You spoke to me more than you think."

"To you?"

"What right have you to put better thoughts into one's mind one day, and to chill them the next?"

They had stopped walking, and were standing facing each other.

"I never meant," said Arnold, "to put thoughts into any one's head. I was a different man, in a lower mood—that's all. Your question is simply, what justification one had to fall back into a cheap and cowardly mood?"

"I have no right," she replied, "to put any such question to you. If I have gone——"

"You are just the person that has that right; and you must and will convince me that I had no such justification," he said, with earnestness.

"I don't quite understand."

"I was giving up," he answered in deliberate tones. "I was really giving up. We say we are speaking frankly. Well, I owe more than I can tell to your talking with me. If one can't pay one's debts, one can at least acknowledge them."

"It is I who have to speak of debts between us."

"It is I."

"Then it is both of us. That makes us quits," she added, with a smile.

It relieved the tension a little. It had been a strange conversation. They had really been talking at cross-purposes. What was in her mind was the ideals of life he had somehow suggested to her, and of that he was unaware. He had been thinking chiefly of his moral surrender during his week's walk, and that she had never witnessed. Yet they strangely understood each other, and felt they were something to each other; indeed, the conversation might have led to a climax but for the appearance of Hood at a turn of the path.

"I see your aunt's maid coming," said Arnold, "and she seems to be looking for you. Miss Crothers, if we have said so much, you must pardon my saying one thing more. You have charged and convicted me of falling back into cowardly and cynical views of life."

Margaret opened her lips to protest, but he went on.

"Yes. I was adrift, and you were the hail of a passing ship. And if it passes away below the horizon? You have given

me a hope: a new hope is the risk of a new despair. Miss Crothers (confound that maid!), I don't know how long either of us is staying here. But we are and shall be —friends?"

There was no time to answer with more than a smile. After all, it is by what people do not say that their hearts speak. Love is the *Lied ohne Worte*.

Hood arrived flurried. Upon her must rest the blame that this chapter ends in an anti-climax.

"There's nothing wrong, I hope, Hood?" said Margaret.

"Please, miss, there's a telegram from England. I think Miss Ethel's ill, miss. Miss Coryn sent me to bring you."

"A telegram that Ethel is ill," cried Margaret; and they returned rapidly to the hotel.

VIII THE INSTINCT OF PARTING

THE telegram was urgent, and summoned Margaret to come home immediately. Her sister's illness was critical.

When they reached the hotel, Miss Coryn, quite recovered apparently from her emotion over the death of Koko, had consulted timetables and made out every arrangement for her niece's departure.

"The mail passes Louville," she said, after Margaret had read the telegram, "at ten-thirty. It's now nearly nine. You can drive there in an hour. I've ordered a carriage for twenty-five past. You've had dinner; do you want more to eat? No? Then, can you be ready in half an hour? Yes? Then, Hood, get your own things ready, and when you've finished, help Miss Crothers. Hood will travel with you as far as Calais at least; you mustn't go alone. I can do without her for three days."

THE INSTINCT OF PARTING 73

And so, at half an hour's notice, Margaret was hurried out of Rosenwald. Arnold had asked her if there was anything he could do, and, on her assuring him that there was nothing, had disappeared. When she came down to the carriage to go off, she looked round for him; occupied as her mind was with her anxiety, she felt she could hardly leave without saying a good-by to him.

"What are you looking for?" said her aunt. "Everything's in. You've no time to lose."

The half-hour struck. Margaret glanced round once more.

"Please, miss, I beg parding, but I saw Mr. Hamilton leave the hotel about half an hour ago," said Hood, interpreting her delay only too well. Both Miss Coryn and her niece darted a look at the woman. Then Margaret got into the carriage, and Hood followed. The *portier* shut the door, and told the coachman to drive fast. The man did as he was told. The carriage flew along.

When at length it drew up at Louville,

Arnold was standing at the station door to receive it.

“ You’ve eleven minutes,” he said to Margaret. Then he nodded to the driver and gave him something. It crossed Margaret’s mind that the speed at which they had come was not due entirely to the *portier’s* injunction.

It was significant in their new intimacy that Arnold gave Margaret no word of explanation for his appearance to say good-bye—he had come by a short cut over the hill—and that she, on her part, found it almost natural to meet him. There was no time, in the first instance, to talk. To get the tickets, to register the luggage, to secure a *coupé* occupied half of the available minutes.

When these things were done there were but a few minutes till the train started. Margaret talked about her home and her younger sister, from whom she had never before been separated.

The conversation paused for a moment.

THE INSTINCT OF PARTING 75

It was a still, solemn night. Though it was late, a faint blush yet tinged the western sky, and the evening star was brilliantly clear. Almost unconsciously, Arnold repeated, half aloud, the first line of "Crossing the Bar," and then stopped, bit his lip, and inwardly cursed himself for his thoughtlessness.

Margaret was sensitive to the suggestion.

"Oh! I cannot believe," she said, "that she is—is not going to get better."

"I humbly beg your pardon," said Arnold, "that I have suggested——"

"You have not suggested it, Mr. Hamilton," she said quietly. "It is impossible to love any one without often thinking of death."

"Yes," was all Arnold felt able to say.

"It is such a dreadful thing," Margaret went on, "if loving simply ends in dying. It would make it impossible to believe in God's love, in anything. Yet," she added, with a wistfulness in her voice, "it all seems sometimes so uncertain." Then more

slowly: "Don't you think one is only made sure that God is love by finding His love in one's own life?"

How Arnold would have given all his art if he could have answered! He was silent.

Margaret changed the subject. "I wish you knew her," she said. "Some day I hope you will."

Arnold simply replied: "I hope so."

There were earnest, passionate words at his lips, and Margaret would not have refused to hear them. But the whole force of circumstances were against their utterance; not only the bustle and publicity of the station and the sense of having but two minutes in hand, but also the feeling that their thoughts could not be at that moment of themselves. To Margaret this came less as a thought than as an instinct; to Arnold it came as a reflection. And yet, with all this restriction and complication of circumstance, when the time really to part came, they knew what they were to each other more clearly than they had ever done.

THE INSTINCT OF PARTING 77

When kindred souls meet, they may feel their attraction; it is when they are parting that they feel they are necessary to each other.

The carriage doors were being shut.

"I must get in," said Margaret, and offered her hand.

"I wonder when I may hope to see you again," said Arnold, taking it. "This is *Auf Wiederseh'n*, Miss Crothers?" he added, with an anxious interrogation.

"I trust so, Mr. Hamilton."

"We have not yet finished that talk."

"No, we have not."

"*En voitur-r-re! En voitur-r-re!*" rang along the platform. Margaret stepped into the *coupé*. She had the window.

"May I give you this trifle for the journey?" said Arnold, and he handed up a dainty silk-covered air-pillow, neatly folded up, with a few gentians in the band. Margaret took it, said a word of pleasure and thanks, hesitated a moment, and then took a rose out of her dress and gave it him in exchange.

"Quits again," she said, smiling for the first time since the interruption of their walk in the wood.

"May I write a line to you some day to learn how your sister is and—how you are?" he asked, after thanking her.

"I shall be glad," she replied.

The campanological performance which abroad sanctions the departure of a train ended, and the engine's shriek echoed in the mountains like a banished spirit. The carriage moved off.

"*Auf Wiederseh'n*," said Arnold again.

"*Auf Wiederseh'n*," said Margaret in reply.

And then every minute widened the distance between them. To him, the tail-light disappeared round a curve, the roar became a rumble, and the rumble died in the distance. To her, his figure in the window-frame was blotted out by rushing embankments, and the train rattled on as if in a very fury of haste to put more miles between them.

There is an instinct in a parting. It is

THE INSTINCT OF PARTING 79

not so much the fear of never meeting again. It is the sense of change. Life is not a state of being: it is a state of becoming. If and when we meet again, shall we have become others—strangers?

We may *meet*; but shall *we* meet?

Not the train only rushes on: πάντα ῥεῖ.¹

¹ “All things are in motion.” A saying of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus.

IX MARGARET COMES HOME

THE Crothers of Broadfields, Bucks, were well-known county-people.

Colonel Crothers was a retired Anglo-Indian officer. He had once been a not bad man and a good soldier, but he had not improved as he got older, and now—not far from sixty—he was both selfish and unprincipled. One hears often from preachers and others about the worldliness of young people, but there is generally a saving idealism about youth that preserves it from the worst kind of worldliness; it is when a man is up in years that, unless he beware, his mundane self-interest, his gratifications, and his vices take their firmest grip of his soul. With Colonel Crothers this was intensified, because—a man of expensive tastes, in which, too, his sons followed him—he had been of late not seldom in straits about money. He speculated a good deal,

and often had to curse his luck; more than once he had involved himself in debt. All this not only demeaned his own nature, but also saddened the life of his wife, who was some fifteen years younger than her husband. She was a woman by nature good, but she had been spoiled by an idle, luxurious life in India—where there are neither children nor aged people to draw out human unselfishness—and had developed morally into a pliant, undetermined woman who in her own heart had pure and tender aspirations, but could do no battle for them in this world. In her day she had been a great beauty—she had still great sweetness and charm—and Captain Crothers, as he then was, became the envy of male Simla when he won Kate Newcomb's hand. But her married life had not been happy. It was not he that she had loved, and, after their marriage, he never wooed her heart. Her life, such as it was, she acquiesced in with an unheroic acceptance. She kept green the early memories of her girlhood and cherished softly hopes of heaven, but she did not even

try to have any immediate ideal either for herself or others. That her sons' lives should be the lives of men of the world, and that her daughters should some day marry men of the world; would make her gentle spirit sad when she thought of it, but it was as things are and presumably must be. There were in the family two sons and two daughters. The sons were the aggressive members of the house whenever they were at home; both of them, however, were a good deal away. Their lives were consecrated to the one idea of sport, and they had alike the vices and better qualities of men whose existence centres upon the field, the moor, and the turf. The daughters were Margaret and Ethel.

In this home the two girls led a life at once natural and exotic. They were entirely capable of entering into the less objectionable sides of their brothers' interests. Margaret loved exercise and enjoyed the occupations of outdoor-life; she was a splendid rider and could throw a line exquisitely, and was, moreover, a girl of whose beauty her

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brothers were proud. Ethel was much younger—she was just over seventeen—and, while more delicate physically than her sister, was the picture of a pure, sweet, English flower, in the gladness of life. Yet both of them had elements in their nature that made them, at the same time, live an inner life of their own. They often had talks together very different to the conversation common in Broadfields, and read books that were not household volumes. It was all a kind of secret. In that house everything that was connected with the life of the spirit—not religion only, but literature in its higher forms and art, and what Ethel called “talking about things”—seemed to be afraid of publicity. The flesh of horses was discussed with vehemence and volubility, but the soul of man was apparently regarded as if it were an indecency. This affected all the house. Mrs. Crothers often prayed in her room, but if she heard her husband’s step, rose hastily from her knees and pretended she had been looking for something. The girls read their favorite

books rarely elsewhere than in Margaret's boudoir or alone in the woods. One day Ethel was studying Browning in the drawing-room when her brothers came in, and she fled with such a flaming face of guilt that to this day they believe she had abstracted some *risqué* volume from their smoking-room.

This was the home to which Margaret was hastening back from Rosenwald. Her spirit could not but be conscious of a change of moral and intellectual climate, but during these hurried days and nights of travel, what room was there in her mind for any thought but this: will she be gone?

The telegrams she got on the way neither gave hope nor extinguished it. One of her brothers met her at Dover; he told her many things, but could not say whether or not Ethel was living. They reached Bilkeley—the station for Broadfields—late; the carriage was waiting, and in half an hour they were at the house. It looked dark and almost untenanted except for some windows

lit up on the third floor. Margaret recognized with surprise that they were the windows of her boudoir.

Her mother met her at the door.

"She's living?" said Margaret in a breath.

"Yes, dear."

"Is there hope?"

"The doctors will not say. A few hours will decide."

"Where is she?"

"In your boudoir; she asked yesterday to be moved in there."

Margaret, throwing off her cloak, rushed upstairs and then stole into the room. Ethel was lying on a small bed that had been brought in. She was in high fever, tossing her hands about, talking and singing, repeating snatches of poetry, and demanding an answer to all sorts of questions. Two doctors were in the room, and they exchanged glances as Margaret entered. A nurse was beside the bed, applying ice. The Colonel and his sons were hanging about

the corridor. At the foot of the bed, stuck into the brass-work, was a photograph of Margaret.

"She would come into this room," said the nurse quietly, making place, at the sign from the senior of the doctors, for Margaret; "and ever since then she's been talking and singing this way and calling for you. There again!"

"Do you think so, Margey? Do you think that's what it means? Tell me, tell me, Margey. Margey, why don't you tell me?"

Margaret knelt down beside the bed and took the fevered hand.

"Ethel, darling," she said, "I'm here."

The young girl lay motionless for a minute's space, with bated breath and closed eyes. Then she suddenly opened her eyes full on her sister and looked at her. It seemed at first as if she did not know her. Then a meaning broke into her look and a smile came on her lips.

"You've come," she said.

"Yes, darling, I've come."

"They told me you were killed in the train," exclaimed Ethel, glancing excitedly round. "Who was it told me that?" Then her eyes came back to her sister and quieted again. "But you're here. I knew you would come. It's you, Margey?" she added anxiously.

"Yes, yes, Ethel; it's me," said Margaret, and kissed her.

"You'll not go away?" said the girl, clutching at her.

"I'll not go away."

"Oh, I'm so glad! O Margey, I'm so happy!"

It was like a miracle. She fell asleep.

All that night neither the doctors, nor the nurse, nor Margaret left her. There were critical hours more than once; but to pass that night meant everything, and when the morning came it found her in a sweet slumber. After breakfast, the consulting physician, who was returning to London, said to Mrs. Crothers and Margaret, "I think I can leave hope with you. But," he added, "she needs the most careful atten-

tion, and she needs"—he turned to Margaret—"you."

"How shall I ever thank you, Sir William," said Mrs. Crothers, "for saving my child's life?"

"Miss Crothers has saved her sister's life," he replied.

X LOVE'S FOOL

ARNOLD was renewing the water in which he had placed the rose. He seemed a new man. He was actually singing aloud. As he replaced the flower he began to himself a verse of the old folk-song, "Es ist bestimmt," to Mendelssohn's familiar melody. He sang the first half—

"So dir geschenkt ein Knösplein was,
So thu' es in ein Wasser-glas;
Doch wisse!"

and then he broke off into his own impromptu German, and in a louder voice sang—

Das Röslein welkt in kurzer Zeit,
Doch Liebe blüht in Ewigkeit!
Das wisse!

Not a few times that morning he repeated his extemporized refrain with new emphasis: "*Das wisse!*"

All emotion needs to be succeeded by a period of reflection in which the whole nature may reaffirm the first instincts of sentiment. Margaret had never had enough freedom or rest of mind during these days for it. Her emotions towards Arnold were too rapidly succeeded by her anxieties about her sister. With him it was different. He had full leisure for this period of confirmation. To some extent, indeed, he shared her anxieties, but he had no absorbing duties, as she had, to occupy the mind, and even his thoughts of Ethel, whom he did not know, could be only thoughts connected with Margaret. So, in the few days after her departure, his mind was uninterruptedly with her and the impression of what she had been, what she had said, how she had looked—it all wrought itself into the very woof of his memory. Really to remember a thing is not simply to know that you have seen it, but, in some definite sense, to see it still. In this sense Arnold remembered Margaret.

One day, after lying for some time above the path where they had talked that evening,

he suddenly rose, went to the hotel, and returned with drawing materials. He was supposed to be forbidden to do work while he was recruiting his health, but he had with him some of an artist's paraphernalia nevertheless. With a rapid brush he sketched the turn in the path, the trees on each side, the snow-hills in the vista beyond. No one passed. He was alone and absorbed in his work. Next day he resumed it. With increasing boldness and firmness of touch he drew her figure, standing as she stood when she stopped and faced him with the question—"What right have you to chill them the next day?" His model seemed to be there before him. Every touch he gave had the great quality that it was sure. He had never worked more unhesitatingly or more confidently. He was in the mood in which a man can do nothing wrong. When he finished, it would be untrue to say he was satisfied, but he had nothing to add.

All this made him only the more think of Margaret, and wonder how things had gone with her sister. He wanted to write, but

hesitated to do so till he knew whether Ethel were still living. The natural and indeed only person who could tell him was Miss Coryn. He had never been introduced to Margaret's aunt, who rarely joined any of the company in the hotel, but finding her one day, the fourth day after Margaret had left, sitting on the terrace, he approached her.

"Will you pardon my intruding upon you," he said, "to inquire if you have any news of your niece on whose account Miss Crothers was so hastily summoned home? I hope you have had good news."

Miss Coryn looked at him critically and said, "Mr. Hamilton, I presume."

Arnold felt the style savored of Central African exploration. He indicated assent. Miss Coryn again looked critically at him, but, after a moment, told him she had received a telegram that morning stating how marvelously Ethel had passed the crisis of her illness. They exchanged one or two conventional remarks, but Arnold felt he

was being examined, and soon took an opportunity to leave.

He went into the hotel and wrote the following:—

“I have just heard from Miss Coryn glad news of your sister. May one use your kind permission to write and say how truly one shares your joy? What a bringer of hope you are!

“You are still full of cares and duties, and I must not send more than this line. You would be surprised to see how I have been spending this morning. I have been painting. I shall show it you when we meet. That must be some day. Your rose is blooming.

“Is it too much to look for a line from you?”

He addressed her with the conventional “Dear Miss Crothers,” and signed himself “Yours sincerely.” It was gapingly inadequate. But let him only see from her reply that more would be not inopportune, and he promised himself that then no longer would he put a gag upon the utterance of his heart.

Then, having posted the note, he went out

once more into the woods. It was again a day of almost indescribable loveliness. The sunlight streamed upon the fields and trees and rocks, a very god of life, and made them visibly breathe with beauty. Arnold was sensitive to nature as few men are, yet that day it was not the beauty of the scene that filled his mind. Its beauty was for all the world; the dullest passers-by could not but feel it. To him it was far more than beautiful; it was meaningful. That spot where the light seemed to strike fire out of the red pine-wood, where the plain brown earth was a wonder of richness and warmth, and the green of the grass palpably lived—it had for him a history. For him and only him! To the gazing visitor it would show its beauty, but only with one it shared its secret.

Arnold lay down and lit his pipe, and, as his eyes followed the curling, seductive rings, he gave himself up to the very luxury of sentiment. Let us not seek to put a lover's dreams in print. It is to make him appear pitiable, whereas the man to be

pitied is the man who pities him and who has it not in him to forget the earth beneath his feet, the world around, mortality itself and all its care, and, in some high, aërial realm, amid the light that never was on sea or land, "bestride the gossamer" and "yet not fall." He that would spend his life thus will die most properly in a poorhouse; but he who is too clever or too cautious ever to be fooled by love dies poorer still.

To Arnold, that day, love was not the problem, the burden, the pain that, in this late age, our modern writers know. It was beauty, life, joy. Love and laughter lived together in his heart. His love was perfect, and it cast out fear: nothing is perfect that has not in it joy. And when love is thus glad in its youth and strength, it ennobles. It surged through Arnold's being like a flood of sweet, clear water, and carried clean away his cynicism, his carelessness, his cowardice. His new love meant new ideals, and these—for love's ideals are high and severe—new duties, new discipline, new effort. Love called him to be worthy of

love: the very call seemed to fit him to realize it.

“Behold!” says love—love that is not afraid to be itself, to be romantic, ideal, impassioned—“I make all things new.” Arnold lay in a new world with life about to begin for him.

Suddenly a thought fell into his mind like a stone thrown into a pool.

Should he be smoking? His doctor had practically forbidden it.

Is not this the pathetic irony of human life—that the spirit is so intrinsically the superior of all its physical conditions and circumstances, and yet that, at any moment, these may threaten it, thwart it, overwhelm it? We are masters who have no security against their own slaves.

The thought came home very poignantly to Arnold. A week before, it would have made him bitter. But somehow, now, it suggested other sentiments—familiar enough, yet unaccustomed. Arnold was not, in the accepted sense of the term, a religious man; but that hour there arose in his heart

a singular discernment that something—some one—was taking to do with his life, and that very generously. Was this—God? He remembered how dull and helpless he had been when Margaret spoke of love and death. Was it, as she had said, that one learned a faith about that by finding that God was loving us? He recalled the familiar phrases of religion. His mind went back to the day when he had read the Twenty-third Psalm, at her request, to his dying sister. It had meant nothing for him then as he read it, though it seemed to be wonderfully meaningful for her. But now there appeared to emerge from it a slender and yet strangely sure meaning for him too. It was true about his life. Perhaps the fitting of it to his experience was fanciful; still, it fitted.

There are two things in life whose secrets are supremely worth knowing—religion and romance. Arnold that day learned something of both. And so the place where he was the fool of love was also the place where he began to find the supreme wisdom.

XI "MILITIÆ SPECIES AMOR EST"

ARNOLD'S was not the only letter that left Rosenwald that day for Broadfields.

The day after he had parted from Miss Coryn, that estimable lady summoned Hood, who had returned in safety from her journey.

"I noticed a remark you made to Miss Crothers, Hood, as she was getting into the carriage the other night. What did it mean exactly?"

Miss Coryn spoke in the tone of a mistress, and Hood did not pretend that she did not remember what she had said.

"I only said, ma'am," she replied, "that Mr. Hamilton, the young gentleman as passed here a little while ago, had gone away."

“What made you tell Miss Crothers that?”

“Well, ma’am, I saw Miss Crothers was looking round for him.”

“How did you know she was looking round for him?”

“Well, ma’am, I—don’t know.”

“I ask you how did you know Miss Crothers was looking round for him?” repeated Miss Coryn distinctly.

“I thought it, ma’am.”

“What made you think it?”

Hood did not answer.

“I’m waiting,” said her mistress.

Hood hesitated a few moments longer, and then gave in.

“Well, ma’am, they were together when I took Miss Margaret the news about Miss Ethel,” said the maid reluctantly.

“Where was that?” asked Miss Coryn.

“In the path in that wood.”

“What were they doing?”

“Only talking, ma’am.”

“Only that, indeed!” said the old lady sarcastically. “What about?”

"Oh, I don't know that, ma'am, I'm sure," said Hood, welcoming the momentary refuge in ignorance.

"What do you think?" her mistress continued.

"I—I—really can't——"

"I know you can't think," said Miss Coryn, "but try, this time." The poor woman felt crushed and helpless. "Do you think," went on her inquisitor, "they were talking of—well, personal matters?"

"Do you mean about you, ma'am?"

"No, you fool; I mean about themselves. Are you utterly stupid? Did you hear anything they said?"

"Oh, ma'am! do you think I would——"

"You would, fast enough, if you could. Well, never mind that. Is this the only time you've seen them together?"

"I've seen them talking out here."

"How often?"

"I don't know."

"That must mean a good many times. Have you seen them together anywhere else?"

“No, ma’am—that is, except at the station.”

“The station! What station?” cried Miss Coryn.

Hood had been trained as a child in truthfulness. For the first time she wished that day that her upbringing had been otherwise. She had the will to lie, but had not developed the faculty. The whole story came out—the parting, the flowers, the last words. Miss Coryn extracted every detail before she dismissed Hood, who then went off to her room and had a good cry.

Miss Coryn was furious. Not only was she indignant at the idea of her niece, whom she had always destined for a good match, throwing herself away on a man who, she said to herself, was “probably not able to keep a cat.” That was only half of it. What enraged her almost more was that she had been hoodwinked through it all. Now she understood why Margaret had been so anxious not to go to Badheim. Her blood boiled with vexation as she thought how she had been taken in.

She marched into the hotel with a very red face. The first thing she did was to take, instead of an ordinary afternoon tea, a good square meal with a half-bottle of Pomery. She meant to have it out with this Scotsman, and with a vague impression that he might show fight, she fortified herself.

Then she sent Hood to ask Mr. Hamilton to speak with her. Hood, who imagined that the whole world bowed in awe before her imperious mistress, felt as if she were summoning a little boy to get a whipping. She was also very loth to do anything against Margaret, in whom, during their two days' journey, she had found for the first time what kindness in a mistress is. And with them both, had she not a deeper bond of sympathy? She too had had her romance; too with a painter. Unhappily, they had quarreled one day as he was doing the area railings, and had parted; but it had ever since given her a certain sympathy with alike romance and art.

On receiving Miss Coryn's message, Arnold naturally imagined that she meant to

give him some further news of the invalid at Broadfields. To his surprise she only stiffly acknowledged his approach, and left him to open the conversation.

“I hope you have not had bad news,” he said at last in some anxiety.

“News of what?” she replied shortly.

“Of your niece.”

“Which niece?”

Arnold was surprised, but he replied quietly: “Your niece who is ill.”

“No,” said Miss Coryn, “I have no bad news of my niece who is ill.”

“You have not bad news, I hope, of your other niece—of Miss Crothers?”

He asked it quickly. It was the move she wanted him to play. She began already to feel sure of victory.

“I think,” she said, “that you have seen Miss Crothers more recently than I have.”

She leant back in her chair as a man does at chess after making what he considers a strong move. Arnold looked up.

“I don’t quite——” he replied. “Ah, yes; I understand. Miss Crothers has told

you that I gave myself the pleasure of seeing her off."

"Miss Crothers has told me nothing," said Miss Coryn, unable to resist the temptation to take the pawn.

"Indeed?" he replied, and she felt what a thoroughly bad move she had made. "Then I am not sure that I do understand."

"You are to understand," she answered, anxious to force the game, "that I am surprised, and more than surprised, that you did not think it necessary and proper to acquaint me with your friendship with my niece."

The suddenness of the attack took Arnold by surprise, but he played the obvious move.

"It was not till yesterday, Miss Coryn," he said quietly, "that I had the opportunity of even making your acquaintance."

She felt she was a fool not to have seen that, but covered her annoyance and pursued the same game. Miss Coryn was a really strong player when she was winning, but she had not great resource.

"I think I had the right to know," she said.

"To know what?"

"To know of your intimate friendship with my niece."

"But what do you mean by intimate friendship?" he persisted.

Arnold was checking her along the line she had left open when she foolishly took that pawn at the opening. She was not good at a defensive game. And champagne is not good to lose on. She played anything.

"You must not imagine you can hide from me what has taken place," she said.

"Pardon me," he replied, "but really, is it I who is imagining things, or is it you? What has taken place?"

Miss Coryn felt she must, at all hazards, get out of this corner.

"That," she answered, "you may ask the hotel *portier* or the *chef de gare* at Louville. Do you think," she continued, playing her new game recklessly, "that a common flirtation in public places is not known to——"

But Arnold interrupted her.

"Miss Coryn," he said, with a dignified displeasure in his tone, "what you are saying, or about to say, is said against Miss Crothers as much as against me. I do not think that you, any more than I, wish to compromise her in this argument."

Miss Coryn was compelled to feel that she had underrated her antagonist, and that she would not mate him in this game at any rate. She proposed a draw.

"Mr. Hamilton," she said, not without dignity and composure of manner, "this is a subject which we need not discuss further at present. Perhaps some other time. Good-afternoon."

"As you wish, Miss Coryn. Good-afternoon."

It had not been a long game, and he almost wished his opponent had played better. He had practically won all through. He felt quite pleased with himself. It did not occur to him that a victory is sometimes more dangerous than a defeat.

That evening Miss Coryn wrote a letter to

her brother-in-law, Colonel Crothers. The letter was as follows:—

“DEAR GERALD,—I was glad to get Kate’s letter, and to hear that Ethel is getting on. I am also glad that Margaret’s coming did her sister so much good, for I miss her here. I just wanted her to go with me to Badheim, and had fixed we should start this week. Of course, man proposes and God disposes, but it’s most irritating to have to alter one’s plans.

“I don’t suppose Margaret will be able to come back for the present, and as it may be some time before I am able to come to England and see you, I think I should let Kate and you know of something I have just discovered here. A young man called Hamilton, a Scotch artist, I believe, if there is such a thing, has, I am ashamed to say, been carrying on with her as they never should have done, and never could have done, if I had not been obliged to spend most of the day in my room. My rheumatism has been worse than ever; I must go and take those tiresome mud-baths again. They have been together every day; he went to see her off, and they parted like two common lovers, giving each other flowers, and so on. I never thought such things of Margaret—with a stranger in a hotel. It is too disgusting. At any rate, now you know of it.

“With love, etc.—Your affect. sister,

“ELIZABETH CORYN.”

XII IN THE COLONEL'S LIBRARY

THE master of Broadfields was sitting in his library. His face was an unhealthy white, his eyes were restless and apprehensive, and his fingers were playing nervously with his moustache. His daughter upstairs was progressing favorably; it was not on her account he was anxious. He was certainly not in love. His conscience had no longer power to depress him with remorse. His was the other trouble: he was in debt.

Colonel Crothers had run through the greater part of two competent fortunes—his own and his wife's. He liked style, kept up an expensive establishment, and made things worse in trying to make them better by Stock-Exchange speculations. He was also a betting man, and had no luck. Lately things had become rather serious. He man-

aged to get himself appointed to the directorate of several boards, and earned his guineas regularly; but, though his ignorance was extensive, the number of such appointments that he could secure was limited. Matters came indeed to such a pass that for the last two or three years the owner of Broadfields was kept afloat only by the generosity of his wealthy neighbor, Sir George Hesse. Colonel Crothers had, in earlier days, shown considerable kindness to Sir George's younger brother, who had been a subaltern in his regiment and died in Afghanistan, and the baronet—unmarried and not close-handed—had repeatedly advanced to him large sums on easy terms. This had carried Crothers along, but it did not extricate him. He had more than once had to make excuse for not duly implementing his side of the arrangement, and on the last occasion Sir George was not quite pleasant about it. And now, two days before, he had been again compelled to write saying he could not immediately repay a sum which fell due that

morning. The Colonel was now waiting for the answer. Hence this gloom.

The butler entered with the letter-bag. His master always opened it himself. The man waited to see if there were any to take upstairs.

"You can leave them all here," said the Colonel; "the ladies are in Miss Ethel's room at present."

The butler departed, and the Colonel opened the bag and looked over his letters. A bill—the *Daily Telegraph*—an advertisement about a trousers-press—the letter from Miss Coryn—the *Sporting and Dramatic*—one or two more dunning bills. It was an ordinary lot, except for a line from a former brother officer enclosing a five-pound note for an old bet he had almost forgotten. Colonel Crothers turned them all over again. No: there was no letter from Sir George.

He was just about to read Miss Coryn's letter when sounds of dog-cart wheels were heard at the front door. In a few moments the butler announced a visitor—a little man, who seemed somewhat excited.

"Sir George Hessle, sir!"

Colonel Crothers felt the worst had come, and got green. For something to say, he called out after the servant—

"Johnson, bring the brandy and some soda in here."

It was a most uncomfortable three or four minutes till Johnson returned, and then the Colonel and his visitor were left alone. Crothers was obviously nervous. But Sir George speedily relieved his companion's mind.

"Oh, I got your letter, Crothers," he said; "well, never mind about that eight hundred, just now. It can wait all right."

The Colonel glared with gratitude, and began to stutter some half-articulate reply.

"The fact is," Sir George went on, hardly waiting for the other's thanks, "I want to talk to you about something else." There was a pause. "You see," he added, somewhat nervously, "a man in my position has a dislike to be made a fool of."

Sir George Hessle always had a profound sense of his exalted station. It was this,

combined with his diminutive stature, which, when he was at Christ Church, had gained for him the nickname of "the Point," since, in the words of the Euclidian definition, he had "position but not magnitude."

The Colonel began to get uneasy again, and filled up another pause with a weak "Yes." The baronet still hesitated.

"A deuced dislike to it," he repeated at last. This was unilluminating.

"So have I," said the Colonel to encourage him.

"Well, in this case," began Sir George again, "I should dislike it particularly. I suppose," he went on, "I ought to have asked to see Mrs. Crothers or even herself about it, but I thought I'd be safer to have a word with you first. If it doesn't just come off, you'll keep it dark."

"Keep what dark?" The Colonel was dull as a male only can be, and had not an inkling.

"Well, then," said the other, "it's this. Do you think that your daughter Margaret would become Lady Hessle?"

When Colonel Crothers was excited he always glared and spluttered.

"My—my—my dear Sir George," he exclaimed, "I've no doubt——"

"I wish I had no doubt," interrupted the baronet unsatisfiedly. "Of course she's not—ah—booked to any one?" he added.

"No."

"Well, that's one thing. And you think she would? You really think so? You see, as I said, I don't want to make a fool of myself. I'm standing for the county at the coming election, you know, and think of the position I should be in before the public if she—wouldn't. You couldn't sound her about it, and let me know?"

"I don't see that that would do any good. Margaret's a girl that will make up her own mind."

"That's just it. It's that that makes me so confoundedly uncertain."

"But, my dear Sir George, she's not a fool."

"I never said she was."

"Well, she would be a fool if she wouldn't

become Lady Hessle. That's what I say."

The baronet was still far from comforted, but he accepted a proffered brandy and soda, and that made the situation grow brighter. After a little longer he seemed satisfied, and rose to go.

"Well, I hope it is all right," he said. "And remember, Crothers, all this is private—as private as those little banking arrangements between us lately. And as to them, well——"

The Colonel was in the act of taking a drink, and his hand trembled so as almost to spill it.

"—If this gets fixed up all right," continued Sir George, "we'll let the other subject drop altogether."

The Colonel had the narrowest escape from choking. The glass dropped on the floor. He became crimson with coughing. By the time he recovered, his visitor had opened the door to go.

In two or three minutes he was again seated alone in his room. His dejection

was all gone. "By Jove!" he said to himself, "she will and she must." He added a consignment of himself to execution if she didn't.

With much equanimity he turned again to his letters. He put the accounts in a drawer contrary to his usual custom, which was to put them straight into the fire. Then he took up Miss Coryn's letter, which he was just beginning when his visitor had entered. He read it carefully, but it did not greatly perturb him. The Colonel had not a very strong imaginative faculty, and this Arnold Hamilton, merely written of from afar-away Rosenwald, seemed a very visionary and unimportant fact in comparison with Sir George Hesse, Bart., of Trentham Hall, whose bodily presence had just left the room.

But a sort of instinct—an animal scent of danger—made his eyes fall on a letter addressed to his daughter Margaret, which lay, with some other letters for Mrs. Crothers, on the table. He saw it bore a Swiss stamp. He took it up and read the Rosen-

wald post-mark. Rosenwald seemed to have come into the room as palpably as Trentham. The Colonel's imagination awoke. He became preternaturally acute. He turned the letter over and over, and the more he turned it the more he was sure from whom it came.

And the physical sensation of turning it made him feel that he must do something with it. He became unable to lay it down. By the same physical process, he seemed to become oblivious of the fact that it was not his. Every time that thought occurred to him, he re-fingered the letter till the thought died.

Colonel Gerald Crothers was not naturally a dishonorable man. He had been an officer and a gentleman. But difficulties about money either ennoble or demean a man. They had demeaned him. And when they demean, they can do so, in suitable circumstances, to practically any depth.

The Colonel read Miss Coryn's letter a second time, and then, with the other letter still in his hand, went to the door and locked

it. He came back to his chair, sat down, looked at the letter, paused a minute, turned it, opened it, and read it. It was Arnold's letter.

His face grew red with not excitement, but a kind of fear. His breath came quickly, as if he had been running. He deliberated only a moment. He took the letter and envelope to the mantelpiece, placed them on an ashtray, lit a match, and set them on fire. He watched the paper burn to blackness, and then threw the crisp, crimpling remains into the grate. The ash-tray was almost too hot to hold, and he burnt his fingers in doing it.

"Well, it had to be done; anyhow now, it is done."

He had just taken another drink when his wife and daughter came along the passage. He opened the door, and called Mrs. Crothers to come in.

"Any letters, father?" asked Margaret.

"None for you," he answered, already behind the door, which he shut almost in her face.

He told his wife all Sir George had said. They agreed it was better not to mention the subject to Margaret. Mrs. Crothers seemed satisfied. He neither showed her Miss Coryn's letter nor mentioned the other. He was in excellent spirits all day.

XIII IN THE GARDEN

THE lawn at Broadfields lay luxuriating in the rich sunshine of a perfect August day. The shadows of the trees dappled the grass and invited to repose beneath their shade. The bees hummed drowsily, and the sound of the mowing-machine alone broke the silence.

Under a large beech, Ethel was lying in a long chair. This was the first day she had been out since her illness. She was a harmony of tinted whites. A pearly shawl concealed her hair; her cheeks had still an invalid's pallor, and her hands were almost transparent. Margaret was sitting beside her. The girls talked only at times: Ethel still needed rest. She drank in the air and light like a flower. Overhead a robin was loudly singing.

"Margey," said the convalescent, after a

long silence, "listen to that bird. It's singing for me. Oh, how thankful I am to be out again! Do you know I think religion is more than anything else just being thankful?"

"Yes," replied Margaret quietly.

"And, I suppose," continued Ethel, "that one would never be thankful if one never had any trouble—illness, or anything of that kind. Of course one should be all the more, but I'm sure I shouldn't be."

"We're all very thankful to see you better," said Margaret. It was not a very direct answer. Before this illness, the elder sister had always been the leader and teacher of the younger in their talks about inward things, but Margaret felt that now Ethel had hold of far more than she had.

"I was very ill?" said the younger girl after a pause.

"Yes, darling, you were."

"Did they think I was going to die?"

"Well, you were very critically ill; but that's past now."

"O Margey, I was too young to die.

There is so much to know and do yet. Sometimes I thought myself I wasn't going to get better. And there were so many things I hadn't seen yet, or read, or done. I didn't mind dying because I was afraid of it, but because of what I would miss. And do you know what I used to think then?"

"What?"

"I used to think of you, Margey, and that you were going to live, and you would see everything and be far wiser and better than ever I should be; and then I thought that I loved you so much that somehow when you were in it all, I was sharing in it too. Oh, it sounds stupid nonsense now that I'm out and well again, but I can't tell you how I took hold of it when I thought that my life was—slipping away."

"My darling Ethel, God is letting us live together here yet." Margaret bent nearer her sister.

"Do you know, Margey," continued Ethel, with a quiet earnestness of manner, "it's easy speaking of God, but I can't find God except in the things I know and love,

and these are in this world. I know it's very wrong, but I really almost hated Canon Hanson when he kept telling me that to depart was 'far better.' "

Margaret looked a mild reproof.

"But I did," said Ethel. "I wanted to understand it and believe it, but I didn't know anybody that made it true. His saying it made it all false and just words. I'm sure he wouldn't think it better."

Is there any severity that is more piercing than that of the purely simple in mind?

"O Margey," Ethel went on in a different tone, "if only you could have told me something about these things."

Margaret's eyes filled with tears.

"My dear Ethel," she said, "you have been learning far more about these things than I know about them."

"I have not learned anything except that they are the things worth learning," said Ethel.

"We shall begin to learn them together," replied Margaret. Then they were silent again for a while.

Soon after Ethel's nurse came out, and the convalescent went into the house again.

It was later in the same day, and Margaret was sitting alone in the same place. She was plunged in thought; her sister's appeal had deeply moved her. And it led her to think of Arnold, and she wondered what he would say on these subjects. Then she wondered where he was, and why he had never written to her. He had asked permission to write, and that was more than a fortnight ago. She could not help feeling that they had lost hold of each other. She tried to recall him and things that he had said. In some particulars her recollection was a little blurred. This was really only because the engrossing anxieties of the sick-room had prevented her Rosenwald impressions from being quietly confirmed in the memory, but the cause of it seemed to her deeper. Was not this just the way of things? "Feet, feelings must descend the hill." Rosenwald already seemed to be in a past, and the succeeding days would make that past only more distant. Yet might they

not have held on to one another? If only he had written, that would have begun a bond. To him too was it all of the past? She remembered his metaphor about the hail of a passing ship. Margaret felt that she and Arnold were like two vessels that had drifted together in a calm and had bespoken each other for a day, and in the morning found themselves carried by diverging currents over the broadening waters. Is not life like the sea—pathless, but full of currents?

Hers were sad thoughts. The fact was, Margaret was worn out.

And in a little she fell asleep.

How long she had slept she did not know, when a footstep on the walk roused her. She opened her eyes and found Sir George Hessle standing beside her. She flushed at having been so discovered, and he noticed it with unconcealed admiration. He also attributed it to deeper feelings at his approach, and took courage to deliver a sentence he had composed, while watching her, as an effective opening.

"I fear I disturb a beautiful dream," he said—"certainly a beautiful dreamer."

"Not at all. I'm much obliged to you for awaking me, for it must be tea-time."

Sir George could hardly keep up the romantic vein after such a matter-of-fact reply. Indeed, the conversation drifted on to the condition of the grouse moors. He felt it was becoming impossible to do it that day. Wouldn't a man, he reflected, look rather a fool if he broke into a talk about grouse with a proposal of marriage?

After a while Margaret rose and asked him if he would not come into the house and see her father and mother.

"I have just been with them," he replied. Then by some sudden impulse—for he had quite made up his mind not to do it—he found himself in another sentence. "I have not seen the lady's walk this year, Miss Crothers; I wonder if you would show it to me just now?"

She was surprised, but could hardly refuse, and the two wended their way down a shaded path. Colonel and Mrs. Crothers

watched their disappearance from the library window.

Not five minutes later, her father, who had remained watching, suddenly grew white and ejaculated a cry of surprise and fear. His wife came to the window. They saw their daughter crossing the lawn alone, her face aflame, her brow knit. She was walking very fast.

“Kate!” cried the Colonel, “she hasn’t refused him!”

The sound of a vehicle being rapidly driven away told them that Sir George had gone.

XIV "AS LOVE SHOULD LEAD ME, OR AS DUTY URGED"

WHEN Margaret reached the house she was about to go straight upstairs, but her mother called her into the library, and she obeyed.

"Something is the matter, Margaret?" said Mrs. Crothers.

The girl was about to evade the question, feeling disinclined to make a confidante of her mother in her father's presence. The Colonel was standing at the window with a look as if he were about to explode. His wife's expression was quiet but troubled. Divining from their manner that both her parents practically knew what had happened she answered her mother's question frankly.

"Sir George Hessle was asking me to marry him."

"And?" burst in the Colonel, for she paused.

“And I did not let him go on.”

“Why?” he almost shrieked.

“Why?” replied Margaret quietly and slowly. “Because I did not feel that I cared enough for him.”

“Did not feel you cared enough,” he repeated with rough scorn. Then he lost all self-control. “Margaret, you’re a fool! You’ve lost the best chance of your life. And do you know what more you’ve done? You’ve ruined your father.”

“What do you mean?” she answered, amazed.

But Colonel Crothers meant to be dramatic, and, banging the door, left the room.

The mother and daughter were alone. Mrs. Crothers’ face was still troubled.

“Mother,” said Margaret, “you are not angry with me? Surely I couldn’t do anything else.”

“Not angry, dear; no. But——”

“But what? Mother, when I don’t love him?”

Mrs. Crothers’ eyes suffused with tears. To her, love was a dream to be cherished

rather than a duty to be asserted. She had her ideals, but life seemed made to disregard them, and she could do little more than give them the homage of her tears. Seeing her, Margaret was troubled too.

“Tell me, mother,” she said, kneeling beside her, “did you want me to marry Sir George?”

Mrs. Crothers stroked her daughter’s hair tenderly. She remembered how often she had tended that hair when Margaret was a little child. Those were easier and—though not perfectly happy—happier days!

“I thought you would be happy at Trent-ham,” she answered at last.

“But,” cried Margaret again, “when I do not love him.”

Her mother looked at her wistfully. Her own life came before her. Her memory went back beyond Margaret’s days. Her first and her only true love rose before her—a young officer who had been killed at the front. She recalled her refusal of several offers that she might be true to that memory. Then at last her yielding, her marriage, and

all that that had since meant. Her thoughts seemed to begin to become sinful, and she checked them.

Ah, it is a tragedy indeed to be afraid to look into the mirror of memory for fear of seeing in it love's ghost!

But again Mrs. Crothers answered her daughter quietly and revealed to her little of her thoughts.

"My dear child," she said, still stroking her hair, "he would be good and honorable. He would not be unkind to you."

Margaret looked up to her.

"Good, honorable, not unkind," she repeated slowly. "And this is all that is to be looked for—good, honorable, not unkind?"

The mother did not return her daughter's look. She was, like many a woman whose married life is without love, careful not to reveal it. But a sense of humiliation crept over her haunted heart and almost betrayed itself on her face. Could she but speed on wings to a distant, lonely grave, and weep on it, and then—God close her eyes there!

The two remained silent. Margaret was still kneeling, and her mother still stroking her hair.

Then the door burst open, and the Colonel entered again. He was in a state of high, nervous agitation, and could not keep away. Margaret rose.

“Was he angry when he left?” he demanded abruptly and discourteously. She did not answer immediately. “I ask you,” he went on with increasing anger, “and I have my reasons for asking.”

“I don’t know,” replied Margaret.

“What did he say?”

“Really, father, I don’t think——”

“Well, then, don’t tell me. I know enough. I know he’s not the man to take a public rebuff like this and lie down under it.”

“A public rebuff?”

“Yes; it’s been talked of as coming, all over the district.”

This from the man who had almost choked of surprise when Sir George first hinted at it to him!

Margaret got into a heat.

"No one ever had the smallest reason," she exclaimed indignantly, "to say a word——"

"Reason or no reason, people talk. I say Hessle will regard this as a public slight, and he'll——"

"Well, if he does. Surely my hand is my own to give or not."

"Hand your own! Don't talk sentiment. Think what you've done. Isn't Hessle just as decent a fellow as you'll find? Hasn't he, I should say, fifteen thousand a year? Isn't Trentham just the pick place in the district?"

Margaret made no answer, but gazed at him with quiet scorn. Her silence exasperated him to new anger.

"Oh, if you're so high-minded that you wouldn't think of these things for your own sake, then you might think a little of other people, and I tell you again you've ruined me to-day."

"You are in his debt?" said Margaret.
"Is that what you mean?"

“Yes, that is what I mean.”

“And you would sell me to compound it?” She spoke slowly but with restrained passion in her blazing eyes.

The Colonel winced, and beat a retreat.

“You can say what you like,” he said angrily, and went to the door. “I’ve nothing more to say to you.” And he a second time went out banging the door.

Margaret turned to her mother, and noticed that the former troubled look had returned to her face.

“Mother,” she said, “I wish you would be frank with me. You did want it?”

“I don’t know, dear,” said Mrs. Crothers; “I don’t know what your duty is?”

Margaret was surprised. But all Mrs. Crothers’ weakness and cowardice had returned upon her while her husband had been in the room. The ideal was clear enough; but when one really faced the facts, was not the safer, wiser course in something lower?

“Surely, mother,” said Margaret slowly, “in marrying, one’s duty cannot be apart from love.”

"My dear child," replied Mrs. Crothers, as it were, reluctantly, "one must not think of only the most ideal duties. There are sometimes duties that seem unworthy of the name. Yet when we don't do them, there is great unhappiness."

It was the practical philosophy of Mrs. Crothers' life. It struck Margaret's mind with a chill. It was new to her, and she did not feel able at the moment to answer it.

"You mean," she said, "that it may be really my duty to marry for money."

"No, darling, no," said Mrs. Crothers hastily. "I mean that Sir George is kind, and a man of honor, and he has money with it all. That is what I mean."

Margaret was silent.

"There is nothing dishonorable in that," continued her mother. "Dear, you were too severe to your father. We only wish to see you happy. Many people miss happiness both for themselves and others because they seek it too high."

Mrs. Crothers spoke sadly. Her heart piteously belied her words, but she really

believed that she was saying to Margaret what was best for her. How easily the timid heart will take safety for truth! Yet no one will make much of life who is not prepared at times to run risks in it. From the days of Abraham, who went forth not knowing whither he went, life, at its noblest, is a venture.

Margaret still remained silent. Her mother did not try to force her to speak, but rose and took her in her arms, gently kissed her, saying, “Think over it, darling,” and left her. She went upstairs and fell upon her knees, and wept and prayed. “O Lord,” she murmured, “I mean the best.”

Margaret was left alone.

When the servants went into the drawing-room late in the afternoon to take away the tea, they were surprised to find it was untouched. “I fear the guv-ner’s been ’it at Kempton,” said Johnson to the footman, and took a muffin.

XV SHOWING THIS STORY HAS NO HEROINE

MARGARET was alone indeed. She was alone at the most critical time in life. The most critical time in life is not when the gusts of youthful passion assail; though a soul be struck down by these, from such falls there is recovery. But there comes to every one the choice of what he is going to hold to, not for merely some step in life, but for life itself as a whole; and it is here that the world has its great chance. What it says is this. So long as you were deciding simply this episode or that in your life, your decisions mattered little; an absurd idealism, an impossible loyalty, a romantic enthusiasm—to do this or that in life under the influence of these does no great harm, and is indeed an interesting experience. But now you are deciding your *life*. Think what life is—think of ten years, twenty years, all your career—

and is it not plain that a decision about that is a very different thing? Episodes may be governed by the romantic, even the ridiculous; life must deal with the possible, the practical, the prudent. Here an unwise judgment is simply to fail to appreciate the reality of the question. Here you must not make a fool of yourself. Here a Quixotic move may lose the game. Therefore, in your decision here, you must be wise in this world, be shrewd—above all, be safe. Here you must keep in their due place illusions, enthusiasms, ideals.

Thus the world and the spirit thereof. It will let a man do some acts of reckless generosity in his youth; but, when he comes to settle down, bid him seek his own first. It will rather encourage a young student in free and ardent speculation while he is at college; but, when it comes to his turning back on account of conscience, from a safe career in the Church, it counsels him to be more easily satisfied. It will let a girl's heart flame with pure ideals of love, but will advise her not to lose a good match from

any silly scruples. The temptations of the flesh are sharp and sudden raids that surprise the soul and seize what spoil they may; the world plans and waits for a victory that shall mean the annexation of a life.

Margaret knew that at Rosenwald she had had a glimpse of truth. The world did not deny it. On the contrary, it bid her be thankful for it. Make that, it whispered, a treasured, sweet, and tender thought in your experience. Make it that by all means. But—and here the whisper became a threatening hiss—make it more than that; make it your practical direction for your life; make it reason for turning away from the security and safety which are the solid foundations of success from, say, thirty onward; and your career will be, in plain language, a mistake, a failure, a thing of trouble. If, for any such impossible ideal, you throw away a future that might have many goods, and might bring to others much good—is that to do well? Remember you are dealing with that real thing—life. Deal with it

really. Face its facts. Render to ideality the things that are ideal and to reality the things that are real.

The struggle in Margaret's mind lasted several days.

She did not discuss the matter further with her mother. Mrs. Crothers felt this, and dimly perceived the irretrievable mistake she had made in, when they were little ones, leaving her children too much to others, thinking that later she would be their companion. A mother's companionship must be from the beginning.

Margaret knew whither her heart looked; knew too—despite Arnold's silence—that true love is always mutual. But in the established structure of life, there seemed to be a settled disregard of this. She surrendered to what appeared to be *force majeure*.

She was not aware of it, but her anxieties and devotion in the sick-room had really unstrung the girl.

A note had lain in her drawer for five days. Partly from a sincere enough ad-

miration, partly from the desire yet to avoid, if possible, a rejection, Sir George wrote her, the day after their scene in the lady's walk, and asked if her decision were really final. One evening Margaret came downstairs with a white face. She met her mother in the hall.

"Margaret, are you ill?" cried Mrs. Crothers.

"I told you, mother, of Sir George's letter."

"Yes, dear."

"I have just written to him accepting him." Her voice was unnaturally calm.

"My dear child—God bless you."

"Forgive me, rather," said Margaret, and she turned away, refusing to be kissed. She went up to her room again. An hour later her maid found her lying in a faint.

Meanwhile the Colonel sent off a telegram with the news to Miss Coryn and also a communication to the press.

A soft rain was falling. It may have been angels' tears.

XVI MISS CORYN HAS HER REVENGE

EVER since her conversation with Arnold about her niece, Miss Coryn had been far from happy. It had confirmed her suspicions that there was something between them, but how much she did not know. Was the thing going on or not? She felt that that conversation had done her no good, and had only prevented her doing Arnold any further harm. She was much troubled.

One day among her letters was a letter from Broadfields, and as she opened it she wondered if Arnold at that moment was receiving one from the same house. It was from Mrs. Crothers, and told Miss Coryn about Sir George Hessle's visit to the Colonel. It only half comforted the good lady. Mrs. Crothers wrote in the strain of one assuming Margaret's consent to so excellent

a match, and spoke of the marriage almost as if it were already a fixed thing. Miss Coryn had more knowledge of human nature, and was not accustomed to believe in anything before she saw it. It was hard to say whether the thought of Sir George more relieved her anxieties or increased them. It might be the very thing to bring this Hamilton affair to a point.

She was pondering what she should do, for do something she felt she must, when there presented himself before her a distinguished-looking, faultlessly attired and excellently preserved elderly gentleman. He took off his hat with admirable courtesy of manner and greeted her.

“Ah, my dear Miss Coryn!”

“Count Orloff!” she replied in surprise.

He was a Russian whom she had met several times in her continental travels. He spoke English excellently, as all educated Russians do.

“I am delighted to see my old friend,” he said gaily.

“How gallant your adjective is, Count,”

she replied half offendedly, yet half affectedly.

“ Ah,” he answered, “ I say my old friend. I, who have found the world so faithless and forgetting, may surely call that friendship old that I have had now for—five years, is it not; five years since that evening at Nice, you remember, when we met? ”

They exchanged old memories.

“ And now we meet again. Ah, our meeting is not mere accident; is it? ”

It was the Count's favorite remark to persons of the other sex whom he wished to impress. He had just come from saying it with great feeling to a German schoolgirl with her hair in a pigtail down her back. The schoolgirl felt, with delicious awe, that her fate must have come. But Miss Coryn was not sentimental, and probably she had heard the remark before.

“ No,” she replied, “ it is not. I want your advice. I want advice from some one who knows two things: the ways of the world——”

The Count bowed slightly.

“—And the ways of love.”

He made a deprecating gesture.

“My dear lady,” he said, “there you will be my teacher.”

“Count,” she said, “I’m serious. I want to stop a certain love-affair, and don’t know how.”

The Count had a natural taste for intrigue of any kind, and was a lover of gossip. He became all attention. Miss Coryn told him the tale to the end, including her talk with Arnold.

“Now,” she concluded, “what shall I do?”

“May I speak with freedom to Miss Coryn?” he answered.

“Certainly. I think you have sometimes done so in the past.”

“Ah, I may have taken the freedom to praise; but may I venture to take the greater freedom to—pardon me—blame?”

“What have I done wrong?”

“Everything, my dear Miss Coryn. What have you gained by quarreling with this man? You have stopped nothing. Perhaps

you have stirred him to energy. You should have remained his friend, become his confidante, and then, as a friend, shown him it was hopeless, or somehow put other thoughts in his head. Always be your enemy's friend—it is a sure rule—if you would outdo him.”

“Your system has at least one eminent exemplar,” said Miss Coryn, with some scorn in her voice. Her English dislike of treachery was awakened for a moment by his cynicism.

“Who?” he asked.

“Judas,” she replied.

He concealed his feelings, and made no answer. The subject dropped, and soon after the Count took his leave.

“These English hypocrites,” he reflected as he went off. “She professes to rebuke me for speaking of it, but, when the time comes, she'll do the thing all the same. That's England all over—the genuine Downing Street article.” And the old diplomat twisted his white moustache with indignation.

Meanwhile Miss Coryn thought it over, and later in the day Arnold was surprised to receive a courteously worded request from her to speak with her again.

If during these days Miss Coryn's mind had been ill at ease, still more so had Arnold's. He had had no answer to his letter. Was Ethel worse again? Was Margaret herself ill? She could not be offended? She could not have forgotten him? His heart did not know how to answer these questions. They became a torment to him.

So very willingly he responded to Miss Coryn's request, hoping, at least, that he might learn some facts. She received him in a not unfriendly way, and her opening words surprised him by their courteousness.

"It is kind of you to come, Mr. Hamilton," she said. "I have often wished to resume that unfortunate conversation of ours."

As he responded only with a bow, she had to go on.

“ I say unfortunate because it ended without our reaching the main point. For that, I blame myself, not you, Mr. Hamilton.”

“ I hope,” replied Arnold, “ you will not think there was any fault in the matter.”

“ Well,” continued Miss Coryn, “ if there was fault on my part, I had a reason for my indignation. I hardly wished to speak of it to you, but as it has been confirmed this morning, I think it is my duty, as one who wishes you no ill, to hide it from you no longer.”

“ Yes,” was all his reply.

Miss Coryn was in some hesitation. She was not sure about playing Sir George Hessle's name as a card till she knew something of her opponent's hand. What if he could trump it? What if really he were engaged to Margaret? She felt she must find out his hand, and she resolved to try and do it openly.

“ Mr. Hamilton,” she said in studiously courteous tones, “ will you allow me to ask you a question which would be impertinent

were it not prompted both by a legitimate interest in my niece, and also, I assure you, a concern for yourself?"

Arnold thought this was rather a studied speech, and accordingly became a little suspicious. He replied merely by, "What is the question?"

Miss Coryn felt she had been too quick. She was not a bad player, but had the fault women often have in games—she was too keen to win rapidly. She should have drawn him on. But there was no help for it now, and she replied at once.

"The question is this: Is there any engagement between my niece and you?"

Arnold threw himself back in his chair and looked at Miss Coryn. She did not like the straight look in his eyes.

"Miss Coryn," he replied, after a moment, "it is plain you would not have come to me to get an answer to this question if your niece had made a confidante of you. As Miss Crothers has not seen fit to do so, I cannot see, with great personal respect, that

this question is one you should ask me, or that I need be expected to answer."

"I conclude from your declining to answer," said Miss Coryn, admiring her own cleverness, "that there is such an engagement."

"Every human being is responsible for his own conclusions," said Arnold, with entire equanimity and good-humor.

Miss Coryn felt baffled, and began to feel angry. She took the aggressive.

"Your reply," she said, controlling her voice, "is natural, but if you knew the reason why I asked you that question, I think you would judge it a sufficient one."

Arnold did not ask her the reason. She thought he would almost certainly have asked it; that he did not, made her think he was afraid.

"The reason is," she continued, for she had to continue, "that I had good reason a week ago to believe, and now I know for a fact, that Miss Crothers is not——"

She hesitated. It was not of design, but

it accomplished what her designs had failed to do. An evident anxiety came into Arnold's face. The poor fellow was dying for news.

"Is not what?" he asked at length, for she prolonged the pause, seeing its effect. She then played her card with some confidence.

"Not free to give her hand to you."

It struck Arnold like a blow in the face. She saw this, though he immediately recovered. He replied with something like hauteur.

"I should hardly be polite, Miss Coryn," he said, "if I said what I think of that statement. I ask your permission to say good-afternoon."

It was not a strong speech. She saw he was a good deal perturbed. She felt sure that if she pursued her advantage, the game would be hers yet.

"Mr. Hamilton," she replied, "this is too serious a matter to be dismissed in this way. I do not complain that you will not believe me. Perhaps you will believe her mother."

She handed him Mrs. Crothers' letter. His impulse was not to take it. But in his desire to know something about Margaret, he could not help himself. He had risen as he asked Miss Coryn's permission to go, and now he read the letter standing. As he read it his face grew white. It spoke of the marriage with Sir George as if the whole thing were fixed and, even already, a *fait accompli*. Miss Coryn watched his face, and began to feel she was having her revenge.

While he was still reading, the hotel *portier* approached her with a telegram. She took it and opened it. It was Colonel Crothers' telegram, and read thus: "Margaret engaged Hessle."

She held the ace of trumps!

She let him finish the letter. He returned it without a word.

"That is from Margaret's mother," she said.

"It is not from Margaret," he replied. It was the first time her Christian name had passed his lips. He felt as if it was an assertion of his claim upon her.

Miss Coryn looked at him. She knew she had him in her power, and enjoyed to know it. Then she played.

"You have yourself seen," she said slowly, "that this telegram has just arrived. You are welcome to read it."

She gave it him. He read it at a glance. His face was now white as a sheet, but he stood up to his fate like a man. He handed back the telegram without a word.

Miss Coryn could be cruel in her hour of triumph.

"I hope, Mr. Hamilton," she said, with just a touch of vindictive sarcasm in her voice, "that you understand now both my indignation and my question. There was ground for them, was there not?"

He did not answer.

"I hope also," she continued, "that you will see that I have acted as your friend in thus letting you know the facts."

"Friendship and facts are things not quickly to be decided upon," replied Arnold, and he turned away.

Miss Coryn was left with her revenge.

XVII THE PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF A POEM

ARNOLD was hard hit. The blow was so sudden and so straight to the heart that his being reeled under it. He did not know whither to look. He was about to enter the hotel, but turned and set off up a mountain road.

All day the weather had been close and sultry. A storm was brewing. As Arnold started, the first drop of a thunder-plump fell with almost a splash. The air became unbearably oppressive. An unnatural apprehensive stillness lay upon everything. The clouds were black and big with threatening. Then a fierce flash came, and in a few moments the tempest burst upon the valley.

He rejoiced in it. He did not want to think. He watched the grand spectacle absorbedly. The sky was lurid lead; the

rain was torrential; the lightning struck the peaks as with an angry, living hand, and the thunder reverberated endlessly among the mountains. The sense of magnificent natural forces in imposing operation was superb. Man seemed a mere insect—his dreams, his sorrows, his efforts, but trifles before these elemental powers. Arnold felt a strange exaltation in it all, and sat with the gods in their titanic sport. The spectacular grandeur, the startling wildness, the sheer material energy of the scene transported him above his griefs. He stood bareheaded on a rocky knoll, and “his spirit drank the spectacle.”

The storm, while it lasted, was magnificent; but it was brief and soon began to pass. The air sensibly cooled, the lightning became less frequent, and the thunder rolled sullenly further away among the hills. Only the rain continued unabated and descended still in torrents. Arnold was of course drenched.

Gradually it dawned upon him that, instead of being an Olympian assisting at the

play of elemental forces, he was a mere man in a soaked tweed coat, wet to the skin, and with considerable likelihood of getting a severe cold. He took off his cap and wrung it, and the water poured in a stream.

Then it occurred to him that he was a fool for other reasons than that he was getting very wet. He felt he could wring his heart very much as he had wrung his cap.

It was rather a descent for an Olympian, but, from more than one point of view, only one verdict on himself seemed possible. He stopped in his walk and uttered it aloud—

“An utter ass!”

The expletive seemed to relieve him, and, with a burst of bitter laughter, he resumed his way. He rather welcomed the rain now as the supporter of his own view of himself. As he tramped along the sodden road, in the squelching mud and amid the steady down-pour, he felt almost happy and at home. He encouraged his pace by singing snatches of songs and shouting verses. Arnold knew a good deal of poetry by heart—too much of it, perhaps, of a melancholy, cynical kind.

One sonnet of Heine's fitted especially into his mood that day, and more than once he burst out with—

“Und wenn das Herz im Leibe ist zerissen,
Zerissen und zerschmitten und zerstoichen,
Dann bleibt uns doch das schöne, gelle Lachen.”

In the last line his heart seemed to find the bitter anodyne for its pain. He recalled another time he had sung German songs—the day when he had put her rose in water and had sung—

Doch Liebe blüht in Ewigkeit,
Das wisse!

Well, now he “knew”; and knowledge is good even when it is bitter.

From singing verses he fell to making of them. As has appeared, Arnold had an occasional habit of composing—the habit that had prompted, for example, “The Foster-Mother.” His surging emotions carved the same channel for their outlet now and began to find expression in these lines—

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And so our love is nothing but a tale,
Sweet in the telling, but now told, and we
Who fondly thought to write for ever, see
The volume close, and find the story stale.

He was about to continue in the same poor strain, when suddenly he realized that the rain was ceasing and the storm was being succeeded by an evening and a sunset of surpassing loveliness. It arrested his thoughts. Instinctively it recalled to him that other evening when Margaret and he had walked in the wood. The memory touched his heart for a moment, but only a moment. He continued thus—

Yes, it was love—a thing that seemed to be
A richness that could never half be spent;
But now I know a woman's faith is meant
For but the season, not eternity.

The harshness of the last lines awoke something of a protest in his heart, and he hesitated to go on. He was checked, too, by the sheer beauty of the scene. The snow-hills stood out clear once more, and every

moment grew warmer with the Alpine glow. The distant valley was a blended haze of rich purples. The western sky was gorgeously on fire. The storm had quite passed and an air of sweetness reigned around. The smoke rose calm and straight from the chalets; the tinkle of the cow-bells came pleasantly down the fields. It was a symphony of beauty and of peace.

Arnold, always sensitive to nature, felt his bitterness charmed away. He thought again of that other evening, and lived again its unforgotten hours. Nothing could now alter that. Nothing could make it other than what it had been—a glimpse of truth and beauty, a draught of life. In his poverty, yet he was rich. His life had a perennial, a perishableless good. Should he in a mood of bitterness throw that away? He became ashamed of his verses—ashamed of both their want of poetic inspiration and their disloyalty to his own heart. He continued, but in a new strain, and the result almost surprised himself—

“Yes, it was love”—I hold to that, I say!

Then if it was, it is, and it shall be.

Love never faileth! Love hath destiny!

And what is life but to hold on Love's way?

The last lines came to him almost unsought, and they turned his thoughts into yet another channel.

He had been thinking only of himself—of his own wrong and disappointment and bitterness. Shall he not think too of her? Was not “the pity of it” just that she had done it—she who had saved him from his worse and called him to his better self? His mind dwelt again on the true Margaret, and his love awoke, earnest to help, ready to redeem.

He did not pretend that she had not played false to her true self in playing false to him. Arnold knew he was unworthy in many things. He was unworthy to be her ordeal. He did not blame her, but he made no false excuses. He thought only of truth's verdict. And that Margaret, to whom he owed his very soul, should ever be judged

for having failed to be true—that stirred him to the depths.

His mind jerked out thoughts in little jets.

Who would judge her? Who could that knew herself? He knew what she had been to him. That he would hold against a century of censors. Who dared say she had ruined a life? Had she not been to him a very salvation? All his life's good—all noble purpose, all brave resolve in him—dated from her. But she had blighted them? No, it was not so. He would prove it never so. These would be yet realized, and his life would show it—show it that she had saved a soul, not ruined one. Then he would defy Heaven itself to condemn her!

He felt like a sailor who has been drifting under a dark sky, but on whom at last the sun bursts out and enables him to take his reckoning and set his course.

His life, that seemed to have fallen to pieces, found again a future, a meaning, an ideal. His love, that had been crucified, rose again from the grave.

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He was no longer a pagan Olympian, exulting merely in the material magnificence of the brute-energy of nature. As never before, he felt in touch with the springs of spiritual life and the things by which the souls of men live. He had a glimpse of the end of life: the end of life is to be a means. He began to see it, to believe it—that he that loseth his life shall find it. Ah, how difficult it is to realize that word; but when it is realized, how many things it makes plain!

As he walked back, Arnold finished his poem. His mind was clear and his soul calm; the lines of two concluding stanzas came easily—

And now, at last, what is Love's way, I see:

All the high hopes and aims to be and do

That Love has shown me, I shall yet pursue,
Will yet achieve, for Love's sake and for thee.

So, when the angels shall thy life unroll,

And if they, judging, seem about to say,

"This woman broke her faith"—ah, then I may
Have answer ready: "But she saved a soul!"

The flesh wins merely victories: the spirit
may be victor even in defeats!

XVIII IN WHICH ANOTHER LETTER IS BURNT AND THE COLONEL APOLOGIZES

MARGARET had more than fainted. She had also, in falling, severely sprained her ankle, and could not move without agony. And, besides all that, she was in a state of strange feverishness and nervousness very unlike herself. The girl, who had rarely had a day's sickness in her life, seemed quite unstrung.

Her mother was anxious. "She's really ill," she said to her husband.

"She's run herself down nursing Ethel," he replied. "Send for Hobson."

When Dr. Hobson came he ordered that she should be kept very quiet, and free from all kind of worry.

But neither nurses nor doctors could accomplish that. Margaret would not rest, and seemed to worry incessantly. She tried

several times to get up to go into her boudoir for something, but she could not. In vain her maid sought to induce her to lie still, and offered to find anything for her she wanted. Margaret shook her head, and continued to worry herself to weariness. They had never known her like this. She was far more ill than was accounted for by her nursing of Ethel.

In the morning her sister came in to visit her. Margaret hardly answered her greeting, but burst out to her at once whenever they were alone.

"O Ethel, I can trust you. Can you do it for me? I can't move. Are you strong enough to go up to our room?"

"I think so, if it's anything important, though I've not tried a stair yet."

"No, you can't. I mustn't ask you. I can go myself."

"*You* certainly shall not go. I can go quite well. But what is it?"

"Well, I think it is inside the red blotting-book on my writing-table."

"But what?"

"The letter."

"What letter?"

"O—a letter addressed to Sir George Hessle."

"Do you want it posted, or sent, or what?"

"No, Ethel," said Margaret violently, "I want it here—in my hands. Don't let any one else get it. But, darling, you can't," she added. "I really can go myself."

"Lie still," said Ethel. "I can do it."

And seizing the opportunity when no one was near, Ethel, very slowly and in considerable weakness, crept up to the next story and entered the boudoir. She opened the blotting-book; the letter was there, and she was just taking it when her father entered the room.

"Ethel," he cried, "why on earth are you up here? You'll kill yourself. What's that you're doing?"

"I was just getting something for Margaret."

"Surely there are plenty of people in the house to get things for Margaret. What is

it? Let me see it. A letter? Whom is it to?"

"Margaret told me to give it only to herself. It's to Sir George Hessle."

The Colonel started.

"Ethel," he said, "I want to see that letter."

"Father, I can't. It's Margey's. She told me not to."

"I will see it," he said. She tried to keep it from him, but, of course, in her weak state, she could offer no physical resistance. He seized her fragile wrist, unclasped her delicate fingers, and got the letter. He read the address at a glance.

"It's all right, Ethel," he said to the pale, helpless girl. "I know about this letter, and I'll see it's sent off all right."

"But it's not to be sent off," cried Ethel in despair.

"Who said that?"

"Margaret."

For once the Colonel was wise and held his tongue. He felt the situation had become extremely delicate. After a minute

he said to his daughter, in gentle tones, that she must go back and rest, and "be assured," he added, "this is all right." He left the room without giving her time to answer. Soon after Ethel's maid came upstairs, sent by her father, who really feared for the physical effects of all this on his daughter, and the girl was helped downstairs.

But no earthly persuasion would make her go to her own room. She went in to Margaret, who was out of herself at her sister's long absence, and told what had happened.

Margaret acted on the instant. She sent for her father. He did not come. She sent again and again so insistently that at last Mrs. Crothers told him he must come or anything might happen. Then he came.

"I wish my letter," said Margaret.

"It is posted," said her father.

"It is not posted."

"It is posted."

Margaret lay quite still. Her brow was drenched. Her lips were pressed tightly

together. Her eyes were fire. But when she spoke, she spoke quite calmly. She called her maid.

“Hampton,” she said very distinctly, but quietly, “I want you at once, at once, to go over in the dogcart—John will drive you—to Trentham, and give a message to Sir George Hessle. Ask to see him himself. Say that I am ill, and that the letter he will receive by to-night’s post was sent by mistake, and that I beg him, as a most personal favor, to return it to me unopened. Now do this at once. If he is out, you must wait. If he is away from home, get his address. Can you do this exactly?”

“Yes, miss,” said Hampton, and, while the Colonel was debating what to do, left the room. His first impulse—a man of his stamp thinks first of a physical solution of difficulties—was to follow her and prevent her going. But he realized he hardly could do that. Yet he felt that on no account must he let her go, and he was shut up to confess the truth to Margaret.

When Colonel Crothers took the letter

from Ethel, he really meant to post it. Indeed, he went out to give it to one of the gardeners to post. But he was essentially a coward. A coward will do a negative thing, but is often afraid to do a positive. The Colonel dared to burn Arnold's letter—to end something; but he did not dare to post this one—to begin the set of consequences that would arise from sending, against her will, Margaret's acceptance of Sir George. But, of course, he had no hesitation in saying he had done it.

Now he must even unsay that.

"Margaret," he muttered.

She took no notice.

"You can call her back."

She still took no notice.

"The letter is not posted," he said at last.

"Where is it?" she answered curtly.

"I have it."

"Give it me."

"What will you do with it?"

"Give it me," she repeated.

The Colonel hesitated.

“Hampton is just going off,” said Margaret.

He hesitated no longer. He took the letter out of his breast-pocket and threw it on the bed. Margaret took it up, saw that it had not been tampered with, then rang the bell again and countermanded her order to the surprised Hampton, who was already bonneted.

“Wait a minute,” said Margaret as the maid was leaving again. “Will you fill that saucer with eau-de-Cologne and put it here on the table beside me? Now light it.” Hampton did as she was bid and then left the room.

Very deliberately Margaret half tore the letter, and then threw it upon the burning spirit. Her father, mother and sister were there, and stood round in silence. No one said a word. They all gazed, as if fascinated, on the bright, dancing light. The scent spread through the room. The whole thing had the air of a solemn rite—a kind of act of purification.

At last it was finished. The letter was

quite burned. The flame gave one or two last leaps and died. Only the refreshing odor remained. Margaret sank back on her pillow.

"Now I shall rest," she said, and they all left her.

"It was her acceptance of Sir George?" said Mrs. Crothers interrogatively to her husband as they went downstairs.

"Yes," he replied.

"Then, after all, that's ended."

He did not answer. He did not dare to think whether it was ended or not. He had an uncomfortable inkling of the truth that a deed is not something done but something begun. The morning's paper would show. It was possible his fatuously impetuous communication was too late for that day and, if so, there was time to prevent it going further. But if it were in—the Colonel was in a heat and a shiver as he reached his room.

Johnson was just coming in with the post-bag. He took away a paper and some letters

for the ladies, and left his master's budget on the table.

The Colonel feverishly tore open the *Telegraph*.

It was there—so coldly and distinctly as if it were out of the question that it should not be there.

He read it in a kind of stupor.

“A marriage has been arranged between Sir George Hessle, Bart., of Trentham, Bucks., and Margaret, daughter of Colonel Crothers of Broadfields, Bilkeley.”

The paper lay on the Colonel's knee. He thought of the thousands that would read it. He thought of Sir George reading it. Then he thought of that unsent, burnt letter. Then of another burnt letter. Then of his debts. Then he began to think of what lies he could invent to get out of it all; but there was simply nothing to be said. In a vague, indeterminate way, his thoughts wandered to pistols and poisons. He realized a little his contemptibleness in that

he dared not follow these last thoughts far. He felt he was further off from manhood than when he was a subaltern.

Suddenly the door opened and Mrs. Crothers almost rushed in. She was excited as he had never known her to be. She had another paper in her hand.

"Gerald," she cried, "have you seen this about Sir George? What does it mean?"

"I sent it," he answered hopelessly.

"You sent what?"

"The notice about the engagement. I thought, of course, Margaret had written him, and the thing was settled."

"But I don't understand. You can't have sent this notice."

"I wish I hadn't, but I did."

"But what do you know about the Melchesters?"

"The Melchesters?" The Colonel was dazed. "Who was talking about the Melchesters?"

"I thought you said you had read the notice?"

"I've read the notice I sent to the *Telegraph* about Hessle and Margaret."

"About Margaret! Gerald, what have you done? Let me see the *Telegraph*."

He handed his wife the paper. She read the paragraph, and sank down in a chair.

"O Gerald!" she gasped. "This is awful!"

"Isn't that what you had read?" he asked.

"No," she murmured faintly. "I've got the *Post*. Read that." And she feebly put into his hands the other paper. The following intimation in it was marked, and caught his eye:—

"We are informed that a marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place, between Sir George Hessle, Bart., of Trentham Hall, Bucks., the Conservative candidate for the county, and Lady Mary Melton, second daughter of the Earl of Melchester."

The room seemed to spin round and round. The universe appeared to be standing on its head. Colonel and Mrs. Crothers

sat gazing at their papers in absolute stupefaction.

“What does it all mean?” she said at last.

“Whatever it means, it means simple ruination to me,” said her husband, whose thoughts had never left himself. “There’s no use talking about it.” He got up and fumblingly tried to fill a pipe.

A knock came to the door; it was Margaret’s maid. “Miss Crothers wishes you to see this letter, ma’am,” she said, giving Mrs. Crothers a note. Obviously Margaret had opened it and read it, but she had sealed it again with a splash of wax before sending it down. Mrs. Crothers reopened it, and read it to her husband. It was dated from Melchester Castle, and ran as follows:—

“DEAR MISS CROTHERS,—As I have received no reply to the letter which I addressed to you eight days ago, I have taken your silence to mean a negative. But as that letter still remains in your possession, I feel it to be necessary and only just, both to myself and you, to withdraw it by informing you that I have to-day become engaged to Lady Mary

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Melton. I feel it right that, in the circumstances, you should learn this directly rather than in any other way, and I have no doubt you will think it proper on your part to destroy my letter of the 4th inst.—I am, yours faithfully,

GEORGE H. HESSLE."

And so the affair between Hessle and Margaret ended. She destroyed his letter. The Colonel wrote an abject apology—which the baronet never acknowledged—and went up to the newspaper office, where, after a stormy scene, a paragraph was concocted expressing "sincere regret at the announcement made yesterday, in entire error, though not inserted in our columns without due authentication." Lord Melchester prevented his future son-in-law from taking any notice of the matter, but it kept the gossips and scandalmongers going for many a day. One of the lower-class evening papers published the two paragraphs in parallel columns, and along with them a form of congratulation to the baronet, inserting both ladies' names, one over the other, and subjoining a footnote directing the sender of

the congratulation, after the manner of ordering one of the alternative bindings of an encyclopædia, to delete one of the names. Another paper said that it was rumored that a Conservative baronet, dissatisfied with the conventional crimes of civilization, was about to be arraigned on a new charge—that of intent to commit bigamy. The sorry jests went on for a while to the grave discomfort of the persons immediately concerned.

What stopped them was the death of Colonel Crothers. He was on his deathbed for more than a week, and during all that time, till just the very end, he preserved the most dogged silence. Neither his wife nor his daughters, the parson nor the doctor, could get a word from him. Several times he seemed about to speak; then he restrained himself and turned his back without saying anything. They thought it was a personal anxiety about his own soul that troubled him, but when the rector asked him about that he shook his head. For once the Colonel's thoughts were not selfish. It was his

wife who had had an unfaithful husband, the dying man was thinking of, and his family who had had a base father; he was tormented to know whether he should confess it all before he died. In one view, it seemed he must; and yet, in another, was it not but to create for them new sorrow and shame? "Try what repentance can, what can it not?" Colonel Crothers was seeing how true it is that when temptation first comes to a man, he is offered the simple choice of good or evil; but, after evil is yielded to, then he finds this among the consequences of wrong-doing—that even though he be repentant, there is offered no longer that simple alternative, but only a choice of courses, no one of which is free from elements of evil to himself and others. He saw it all and much more—dying!

One evening, when only the family were in the room, he suddenly raised himself and looked at them intently. After some moments of painful stillness, he said, in a choked, husky voice: "I want to beg your pardon." His wife and Margaret took his

hands; he had not held them out, but, with a timid glance, he returned the pressure. Then he was gone.

May Another, too, have accepted that apology and laid a loving hand upon that soul falling headlong from the little ledge of time into the great abyss!

PART TWO

A YEAR AFTER: THE STORY ENDS WITH MUSIC

[SCENE. *The conservatory in MRS. WALMER'S house in London. A reception going on. Music by a band, and conversation. Enter two young men, meeting.*]

1ST Y. M. HALLO! You here, old man?

2ND Y. M. You here? I thought you never went out.

1ST Y. M. Everybody seemed coming here to-night.

2ND Y. M. Seems to me there's only one man here. The rest of us might as well be at home. I object to these one-horse shows.

1ST Y. M. Who's the one man?

2ND Y. M. Who's the one man? Why, that Arnold Hamilton, of course.

1ST Y. M. Who's he?

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2ND Y. M. Who's he? Where do you live?

1ST Y. M. In bed chiefly.

2ND Y. M. And asleep apparently. Do you ever get up to go to the Academy?

1ST Y. M. Never think of such a thing.

2ND Y. M. Well, Hamilton's the chap that's painted the picture that everybody's raving about. It's the picture of years, they say. I hear the Luxembourg's picked it up already.

1ST Y. M. Oh. Must look at him. Where is he?

2ND Y. M. Well, you can hardly get a look at him for the mob round about him. He was in the music-room a minute ago, quite near Edward Langton.

1ST Y. M. Is Langton here? You mean the beggar that licked Hessle last election in Bucks. I should like to see him too. What's he like?

2ND Y. M. Best-looking man in the room. Dark eyes and moustaches.

1ST Y. M. He's too lucky a dog that. Got his fiancée with him?

2ND Y. M. I believe so.

1ST Y. M. Well, although I am a Conserva-

tive, I didn't mind his cutting out Hessle.
Hessle's a poop. But——

2ND Y. M. But you did mind his cutting you
out with the fair Ethel. He did a double
event that month certainly. Why don't
you stick in for the other one?

1ST Y. M. The other what?

2ND Y. M. The other Crothers.

1ST Y. M. I'm afraid of a premature dis-
closure in the papers.

2ND Y. M. Drop it now. That story's done.
But she's a long sight too good for you.
Besides, your tie's crumpled.

1ST Y. M. My dear boy, your eyes are green.

2ND Y. M. Not I. Go in and win.

1ST Y. M. Go in where?

2ND Y. M. Go and talk to the engaging and
disengaged Miss Crothers.

1ST Y. M. Is she here? I thought she hadn't
been visible all the season.

2ND Y. M. Well, of course they've been liv-
ing quietly; it's only a year since their
father died. But she's certainly here to-
night. So don't lose your chance.
Straighten your tie though.

1ST Y. M. Will you shut——

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2ND Y. M. Hush! here are some people.

[1ST Y. M. *adjusts his tie. Enter MRS. WALMER and two young American girls.*]

1ST Y. A. G. Of course I've been. I've been eight times to see it. It's quite the sweetest thing that ever happened. I must get introduced. Mrs. Walmer you will, won't you? I want him to write in my confession-album.

MRS. WALMER. Certainly, dear, if I get a chance. It's difficult to get hold of him.

2ND Y. A. G. And me too, please. I want one of his paint-brushes.

MRS. WALMER. Well, keep in sight and I'll do my best for you. Ah [*to the two Y. M.*], you two really must not stay out here all the evening. I want to introduce you to the Miss Rudds from New York. Will you take them in to supper?

[*They all go out, MRS. WALMER making the introductions. Immediately re-enter MRS. WALMER, and, from the other side, enter EDWARD LANGTON, M. P., and ETHEL CROTHERS.*]

MRS. WALMER. I thought I saw you dear young people coming, so I've cleared the conservatory for you to have a chat. Are you tired of people congratulating you?

ETHEL. I'm tired of people saying to me they "hope" I shall be happy. They ought to know I shall be.

MRS. WALMER [*approvingly*]. That's the way. Yes, I think you two will do. Mr. Langton, I hope you know that you are engaged to a girl worth doing anything for.

ETHEL. Oh, really! I'm going to look at these flowers. [*She walks away.*]

EDWARD. I know it. Then will you do something for her just now, Mrs. Walmer?

MRS. WALMER. What's that?

EDWARD. I wonder if you could get Arnold Hamilton to come out here. I want him and Ethel to meet each other.

MRS. WALMER. I thought you and he were old friends.

EDWARD. Yes; so we are. But I can't get hold of him.

MRS. WALMER. Neither can any one appar-

ently. You've known him a long time, haven't you? Well, don't you think he's looking ever so much better than he used to? His winter in Egypt seems to have made a new man of him.

EDWARD. Oh, it's simply marvelous. I can't understand it. I saw him just for a day or two in Switzerland just a year ago—exactly the time I believe when Ethel was so ill—and he looked absolutely miserable. And now he's the very picture of strength.

MRS. WALMER. Then his anxiety about his health has all passed away, has it?

EDWARD. So I believe. Certainly he seems free from all anxiety. It was rather an original treatment he gave himself.

MRS. WALMER. What treatment did he give himself?

EDWARD. Well, I mean his cutting himself off from everybody for nearly a year.

MRS. WALMER. He went up the Nile, didn't he?

EDWARD. Yes, he got a pass up to Khartum, and went on further even than that, I

believe. None of us had a single scrap from him, and he left no address after Cairo. We began to call him "Waring."

MRS. WALMER. Really. I didn't know he had cut himself off like that.

EDWARD. Cut himself off entirely. He believed, for example, that it was Margaret that Sir George Hessel married.

MRS. WALMER. Ah! [*To herself.*] That explains!

EDWARD. Well, anyhow it suited him. He's twice the man he was.

MRS. WALMER. Yes; and don't you think that it isn't only physically that he's stronger?

EDWARD. I know what you mean.

MRS. WALMER. There's something bigger and truer and tenderer too about the whole man—at least I feel it.

EDWARD. We all feel it. And his work shows it. This furore about his picture is not for nothing.

MRS. WALMER. I am so glad to hear you say that.

EDWARD. I remember when we were at

Heidelberg together, as students, his favorite quotation in his better moods—sometimes he was an utter cynic—was that verse—

“He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who will not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.”

It was an expression of his—“the touch” of so and so’s life. Well, I can’t help feeling that Hamilton, somehow—I don’t know where or in what respect—has dared to put his life to some touch and has gained it.

MRS. WALMER. Yes, I think so too. And there’s more than that. He has something he never used to have. Was he not more or less of an Agnostic?

EDWARD. Well, he never said very much about that. He is not an Agnostic now.

MRS. WALMER. He is not, you say?

EDWARD. Certainly he is not. Only the other night, I heard him say that there are two ways of describing and defending religion—one by reasoning about his-

tory and doctrine, the other by reading life; and he added, what utterly surprised me, that he remained an artist, and had not gone into the Church, because he could not state or argue for Christianity dogmatically, but only by trying to interpret life and nature.

MRS. WALMER. Did he really say that? After all, there is only one Truth—surely we Christians should say that most of all. I do feel about Arnold that he has kept true to the Truth as it appealed to him. That is “the touch” of his life—of anybody’s life.

EDWARD. And so his “deserts are” not “small.”

ETHEL [*who had been round the conservatory, and now returned*]. I hope you’re not talking still about my deserts. Anyhow, sir, you don’t seem to think I deserve to be talked to!

MRS. WALMER. It’s been my fault, Ethel. I’m getting garrulous with my advancing years. But I’m going to leave you for a chat now.

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ETHEL. And now, somebody's coming.

EDWARD. It's Arnold.

[*Enter* ARNOLD HAMILTON.]

MRS. WALMER. Come away, Mr. Hamilton; we've just been talking of you. Mr. Langton has been telling me of the days when you and he were at Heidelberg together.

ARNOLD. "*Die schönen Tage in Aranjuez.*"

MRS. WALMER. "— *sind nun zu Ende.*"

Perhaps you would like life to be all Heidelberg?

ARNOLD. No, no. There's a time to play. It's a glorious time, but it becomes contemptible when it's belated.

EDWARD. I think I must quote "Youth" to Mrs. Walmer.

ARNOLD. "Youth?" Oh, I know what you mean. Don't be foolish.

MRS. WALMER. But what is "Youth?" Is it a poem?

ARNOLD. It is certainly not a poem.

EDWARD. Well, it is verse. It is half a dozen lines Mr. Hamilton gave us one night after his farewell *kneipe*.

ETHEL. Tell us them, Edward.

EDWARD [*to ARNOLD*]. Shall I?

MRS. WALMER [*to EDWARD*]. Don't ask him,
but just go on.

EDWARD. Well, this is it—

“Drink out your glass, then turn it o'er;
He who would life's first vintage store,
Finds it unfit and rank;
Yet may he hang upon the wall
Of memory where his eyes oft fall,
The goblet whence he drank.”

ARNOLD. Mrs. Walmer, will you tell Mr.
Langton to go away? He is becoming
a bore.

MRS. WALMER. We are much obliged to Mr.
Langton, and to the author too. [*A serv-
ant enters, gives a message to MRS.
WALMER, and goes out.*] But I'm afraid
I must go away; I'm leaving the rest of
my guests too long.

EDWARD [*to whom ETHEL has said some-
thing aside*]. Certainly. Hamilton, I
want to introduce you to my fiancée.

ARNOLD [*somewhat embarrassed*]. With
pleasure.

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EDWARD. Mr. Hamilton—Miss Ethel Crothers.

MRS. WALMER. Well, Mr. Langton, shall we leave them a few minutes? I must go back to the drawing-room. I hear the Dean has come, and I know he wants to meet you; so if you will come with me, I can introduce you to him.

EDWARD. Very well. [*To ETHEL.*] I shall be back as soon as I can.

[*MRS. WALMER and LANGTON go out. A rather awkward pause between ARNOLD and ETHEL.*]

ETHEL. I have so often heard Edward speak of you.

ARNOLD. Well, I can only say of him that he's the very best fellow in the world. May I congratulate you both? I don't need to wish you happiness, for you've got it.

ETHEL [*smiling assent*]. Thanks. You were abroad together, weren't you?

ARNOLD. In Heidelberg? Oh, that was years ago.

ETHEL. But I thought he met you in Switzerland last year.

ARNOLD. Yes, he did. For a day.

ETHEL. That was at Rosenwald, wasn't it?

ARNOLD. Yes. [*A pause.*] Have you been there?

ETHEL. No. My sister was there last year. She left immediately before Edward arrived, I think. But, of course, I did not know anything about him then. I tell my sister and Edward that if she hadn't left before he came, they would have fallen in love with one another, and I should never have been in it. Oh, but I forgot that you don't know my sister; do you?

[ARNOLD, *instead of answering, stoops to pick up a leaf from the floor. A pause again: it makes* ETHEL *uncomfortable.*]

ARNOLD. Are you cold here? Should we not go in?

ETHEL. I am not at all cold, thank you. But if you would rather——

ARNOLD. No, not at all. Let me see; what were we talking about?

ETHEL. We were talking about Rosenwald.

ARNOLD [*shortly*]. Ah, yes. [*Another pause.*]

ETHEL [*in desperation*]. You must be tired, Mr. Hamilton, of hearing people praise your picture.

ARNOLD. It depends upon the people.

ETHEL [*gaily*]. That is embarrassing. I was just going to ask you to let me thank you for it.

ARNOLD. You are very kind.

ETHEL. You must be very happy. To speak to so many people—it's a splendid thing.

ARNOLD. If it says anything!

ETHEL. It says more than I can tell you to me, and, I know, both to Edward and to my sister too. "Art was meant for that!" [*With animation.*]

ARNOLD. Yes, yes. But you are speaking far too generously to me, Miss Crothers.

ETHEL. I'm not Miss Crothers. I wish my sister *was* here. She can speak about these things. I must get you to meet each other. [*Another longer pause. At last, to ETHEL'S great relief, EDWARD enters.*]

EDWARD. I'm thankful to get back. Some anti-vaccination person has been pursuing me ever since I left.

ETHEL. Poor boy! But, Edward, do you know where Margey is?

EDWARD. I saw her in the anteroom this moment.

ETHEL. Oh, do go and tell her to come here. I want to introduce her to Mr. Hamilton. But [*aside, earnestly*], EDWARD, don't be away more than one minute.

EDWARD. It's a risk; that man will be hovering about still. But I'll do it.

[EDWARD goes out. Another pause.]

ARNOLD. I beg your pardon, but I'm afraid—in fact I—er—promised to go back to meet some one in the drawing-room. You must be so kind as to excuse my leaving whenever—er—your——

[Enter EDWARD and MARGARET. ETHEL runs to meet her sister. ARNOLD slips out.]

ETHEL. Oh, Margey, here's Mr. Arnold Hamilton. Where is he? Well, Edward, I think your friend is the queerest-man-

nered mortal that ever was made. He stuck in the conversation every half-minute, and made me quite uncomfortable. He may be a great man and all the rest of it, but I don't want you to leave me alone with him again. Will you tell him to come back? [EDWARD *goes out after* ARNOLD.] But, Margey, what's the matter? You're as pale as a ghost.

MARGARET. Nothing, dear.

ETHEL. There *is* something. Why did Mr. Hamilton go off like that? Have you met him before?

MARGARET [*reluctantly*]. He was at Rosenwald when Aunt Elizabeth and I were there—I think. That's the only time I've seen him.

ETHEL. You knew him there?

MARGARET. We—knew each other in the hotel.

ETHEL. Why did he not tell me that? We were speaking of Rosenwald and of you being there. And why wouldn't he stay to meet you again? Margey, you can't keep this from me. I know now!

MARGARET. Know what, darling? What are you talking about? Let us go in to the drawing-room.

ETHEL. I knew at the time you were ill, the time when you burnt that letter, that there was something *particular* that kept you from marrying Sir George Hesse.

MARGARET. Ethel!

ETHEL. And I know now why. I understand it now. My darling Margey, it will be all right! I am so sure of that!

[*She kisses MARGARET. A young man appears at the door, cries "Good heavens!" and retires.*]

MARGARET. Ethel, you mustn't. There are people about.

[*Re-enter EDWARD.*]

EDWARD. He won't come.

ETHEL. But he shall come.

[*ETHEL goes out. MARGARET sinks down in a chair, and closes her eyes.*]

EDWARD. Are you ill, Margaret? Shall I get you a glass of wine?

[*She seems to indicate assent, and he goes out. The music of the band is heard*

more distinctly; it is playing a Hungarian valse. MARGARET listens with an air of recognition. In a little she hears voices approaching, and, hastily rising, goes out. Enter, by another door, ARNOLD and ETHEL.]

ETHEL. There's no one here! Mr. Hamilton, I brought my sister to you, and *you* disappeared; I bring you to her, and *she* disappears. I did not know you were such friends!

ARNOLD. Do people play hide-and-seek when they have been friends?

ETHEL. Perhaps we can discuss that again. At present, Mr. Hamilton, will you promise to stay here—inside that square of red marble? I trust you.

[Enter EDWARD with a glass of wine.]

EDWARD. Is Margaret not here?

ETHEL. I'm just going to her. What's that wine for? *[EDWARD and ETHEL go out, talking. ARNOLD sits down. The music arrests his attention, and he listens alertly.]*

ARNOLD *[to himself]*. It is the same valse!

How it brings back the place! Well, this is kismet; but—is it her cruelty or her mercy?

[He leans back in a reverie with closed eyes. The two young American girls appear at the door.]

1ST Y. A. G. Now's the chance to speak to him. Go on!

2ND Y. A. G. You go on!

1ST Y. A. G. Well, both of us.

[They approach. ARNOLD suddenly opens his eyes. The younger girl runs out. Then, enter MRS. WALMER.]

MRS. WALMER. What is the matter?

ARNOLD. I'm afraid I startled these young ladies. Probably they hadn't noticed I was here. I am very sorry.

MRS. WALMER *[laughing]*. Well, if they didn't notice you, it wasn't from failing to look for you all evening.

1ST Y. A. G. Mrs. Walmer, you promised.

MRS. WALMER. Very well, then. Mr. Hamilton, this is Miss Rudd from New York, and she's very anxious you should write something in her—what is it, dear?

1ST Y. A. G. Confession-album. Here it is,
and I've got a stylograph pen. [*She pulls
out a book and pen.*]

MRS. WALMER. But Mr. Hamilton really
cannot write out a list of answers just
now.

1ST Y. A. G. Only one answer then. Will
you write an answer to one question
please, Mr. Hamilton?

ARNOLD. Well, what is the question?

1ST Y. A. G. [*Giving him the book and pen.*]
That one please.

ARNOLD [*reading.*] "What is your favorite
quality in woman?" Very well. [*He
writes something and hands back the book
and pen.*]

1ST Y. A. G. [*reading.*] "*Das ewig Weib-
liche.*" But won't you explain what or
who——

ARNOLD. You ask a volume.

1ST Y. A. G. No; a name would be enough.

ARNOLD [*shortly*]. I must be excused.

MRS. WALMER. Now, dear, you've really got
Mr. Hamilton to do what you wanted, and
it is not fair to ask more. [*The Y. A. G.*

thanks ARNOLD, *and goes out.*] I hope you haven't minded this, Mr. Hamilton, but really you deserve some punishment for immuring yourself here all the evening. Remember everybody wants to meet you.

ARNOLD. Well, I've promised to stay within this marble square till Miss Ethel Crothers comes back.

MRS. WALMER. Where has she gone to?

ARNOLD. To find some one, I think.

MRS. WALMER. Who?

ARNOLD. Well—her sister, I believe.

MRS. WALMER [*after a pause*]. Mr. Hamilton, will you let me say something to you? I think I am Miss Crothers' closest friend, and, though I have not known you very long, you have let me be a kind of mother to you sometimes.

ARNOLD. You may say anything to me except one thing.

MRS. WALMER. What is that?

ARNOLD. "Mr. Hamilton."

MRS. WALMER. What do you mean exactly?

ARNOLD. I mean that there is not a woman

living who can call me Arnold. Will you?

MRS. WALMER. Willingly.

ARNOLD. Thank you. And now, what were you going to say to me?

MRS. WALMER. Well, I shall say it now in this form. There is no reason, except in yourself, why I should be the only woman who calls you Arnold. You must do justice to yourself—and not only yourself. Remember, too, there are circumstances in which it is far more difficult for a woman to say anything than a man. [ARNOLD *looks at her, but does not answer.*] You do not misunderstand me?

ARNOLD [*after a pause*]. She has spoken to you about it.

MRS. WALMER. Once—in answer to a question from me. The person from whom I got any information was, perhaps, hardly your best friend—Miss Coryn. But I gathered that she—I don't mean Miss Coryn!—and you should——

ARNOLD. Should?

MRS. WALMER. Should—well, have things cleared up. Meet, or write, or——

ARNOLD [*quickly*]. I wrote.

MRS. WALMER. You wrote?

ARNOLD. Yes.

MRS. WALMER. She never got it. That is the one thing I know from herself. It was just that—just that she never heard a word of or from you after you parted. Mr. Hamilton—Arnold, I mean—I don't want to be a busybody in this, but (I hear some people coming) you will let me say: unless you regard it as ended—if that is not your thought—you will clear it up?

[ARNOLD *looks at her again and assents.*

Enter EDWARD, MARGARET, and ETHEL.]

EDWARD. We've just been looking for you, Mrs. Walmer.

MRS. WALMER. And I just want you. I want Ethel and you to meet some particular friends of mine. Will you come with me back to the drawing-room? Arnold, I shall give you a little grace, but

you must put in an appearance sometime. Margaret, you know Mr. Hamilton; perhaps he will take you in to supper when you wish.

EDWARD [*to* ETHEL]. I think this is simply putting them in a deadly fix, Ethel.

ETHEL [*to* EDWARD]. Oh, women know about these things!

[MRS. WALMER, EDWARD, *and* ETHEL *go out. The band is still playing the Hungarian valse.*]

ARNOLD. You recognize the music?

MARGARET. Yes.

ARNOLD. Then you remember Rosenwald?

MARGARET [*in a lower voice*]. Yes.

ARNOLD. I have remembered it, I think, every day of my life since I was there. And, if I thought of it, that was in order to think of you—[*she makes no answer, but looks down; he continues*—of you as the light of my life.

MARGARET [*almost inaudibly*]. A “light that failed.”

ARNOLD. Love never faileth!

[She looks up. Their eyes meet. He takes her hands; then draws one through his arm. They go to the garden door, and he throws it open. They pass out into a veranda. The band plays the Hungarian valse more loudly.]

THE END

(OF THE BEGINNING)

ENVOY

"Love never faileth—a sweet refrain!

And your tale may be true for you;
But how many there that have loved in vain,
And their hearts had never their due;
Have you thought what the breath of insolent death
Or the malice of fate can do?"

How the flower of the heart is to fulness grown
May be more than this life can show;
The bringing to bloom is of God alone,
And the time for it He must know;
His is the hour of the perfected flower,
Yours is the seed to sow.

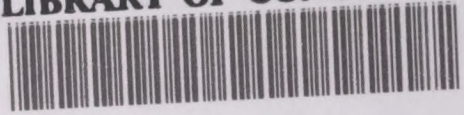
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